

*The* REMAKING  
OF A MIND

Henry de Man



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# THE REMAKING OF A MIND







*Lieutenant H. de Man*

# THE REMAKING OF A MIND

A SOLDIER'S THOUGHTS ON  
WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

BY

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## FOREWORD

. . . . Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?  
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,  
The making of perfect soldiers.  
Be it so, then I answer'd,  
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one than any,  
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,  
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last), the field the world,  
For life and death, for the Body and the eternal Soul,  
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,  
I above all promote brave soldiers.

WALT WHITMAN, *As I ponder'd in silence.*

As books go, perhaps I might have written a book on my war experiences.

With a record of three years' service at the battle front, in capacities as various as those of a private in the infantry, a liaison officer, an artillery observer, and a trench mortar officer; with some experience of the Belgian, British, Russian and Roumanian fronts; four months on a diplomatic mission to the Russian revolutionary government, and six months on a government mission to the United States, possibly my war diary might not have proved much more

uninteresting than most similar publications on the market.

As a matter of fact, I believe it would have been less dull to the reading public at large than this book is going to be. For I intend to make this a record of my psychological war experiences, without any more reference to actual occurrences than is necessary for the understanding of their reaction on my mind.

I realise perfectly well that a book of this type is going to appeal to a much smaller section of the public than would a miscellany of trench stories, or diplomatic revelations in the style of war correspondents. Yet, rather than swell the number of books of this type, I think it more worth while to contribute some fragmentary material for those who are seeking an answer to the questions: How has the war affected the mind of those who have done the fighting? Have they formed any new ideals? And what part are these ideals going to play in the reconstruction of Europe?

This book is intended to show the remaking of a mind during the remaking of the world. It will be a succession, in broad chronological order, of the reactions of the war, in its changing military and political aspects, on the mind of a young European who has been "all through it."

It does not claim to be typical as a psychological document any more than the writer himself

would claim to be considered typical as a European. The reaction of the war on men's minds is bound to differ widely according to their nationality, their personal dispositions, their social condition, their level of education, the nature of their actual war experiences, and so forth. I doubt whether anybody could at present give first hand personal evidence on a subject like this, and yet make good a claim that it is typical of the European mind at large. As soon as evidence ceases to be personal, not much reliance can be placed on its accuracy. And subjective accuracy is all I claim for these *confessions*. I will make them documentarily autobiographical evidence with the help of my diary, my notes, and my letters to my wife and a few friends.

I realise that the form I have chosen will make a certain demand upon the reader's patience and leniency. Apparent inconsistencies will occasionally reflect the contradictory impressions made upon the writer's mind by the diversity and rapid succession of experiences; while any uncouthness of style or expression may be due to the necessity of setting forth my innermost thoughts in a foreign tongue, and this in spite of the assistance of my cousin, George Greenland, Jr., of London, who suggested numerous improvements in my manuscript. Nevertheless, I have thought that it was better to sacrifice form to the recording of my impressions in the order

in which they occurred, and whilst they are still vivid in my mind.

The views recorded in this book are those of what in Europe we used to call a socialist. In America I would probably be called a radical, for I would no more identify myself with the Socialist Party of America than with the Russian Bolshevik. As such, these views are typical only of a minority of the Europeans of the so-called educated class; but, on the other hand, they may throw some light on what post-war socialism is going to be in Western Europe. The war has "radicalized" Europe to such an extent that a constitutional seizure of power by labour in most countries seems to be within the possibilities of a near future. But whilst giving socialism a chance to pass from the stage of agitation to that of realisation, it has been made manifest that, in Western Europe at least, practical socialism is going to prove itself very different from theoretical pre-war socialism. I am confident that American readers who are anxious to gather first hand information on the state of mind of European socialists will welcome limited and fragmentary, but personally sincere, evidence rather than general descriptions, whose accuracy is necessarily in inverse ratio to the scope of the ground they cover.

There is another reason why I insist on the subjective sincerity of this book. It is because

I feel the need to apologise beforehand for saying things which may hurt the feelings of many people. I shall have, for instance, to analyse and discuss notions as taboo to the common citizen as those of patriotism, heroism, and duty. I trust that the constructive aim of this analysis will not escape the notice of the reader who will be patient enough to follow the story of my mental evolution to the end. Yet I am afraid that the mere fact of admitting doubt, which is of course an essential condition to any analytical thinking, will hurt the sentiment of people who consider doubting itself as an offence. So let those who expect "dulcet rhymes" of me lay this book aside, and, following the advice of Walt Whitman to "a certain civilian," "go lull themselves with piano tunes." The others, I hope, will keep in mind that I have learned my lesson on the battle-fields of a war which has not only changed the map of the world, but also the mind of the men who have fought it. And the greatest lesson I have learned there was to think earnestly, sincerely and ruthlessly. Oh, how trivial all I thought and did before the war seems to me now! I feel as though I did not really start living until the constant menace of near death to myself and those for whom I was responsible gave life the value of sacrifice. It is one thing to play with words and theories, and to send them out into the world, the world as it was in those times,

before everything had to be paid for in blood.  
But it is another thing to see how—

“That flesh we had nursed from the first in all cleanness was  
given  
To corruption unveiled and assailed by the malice of Heaven—  
By the heart-shaking jests of Decay where it lolled on the  
wires—  
To be blanched or gay-painted by fumes—to be cindered by  
fires—  
To be senselessly tossed and retossed in stale mutilation  
From crater to crater—” \*

And then, to have to kill and maim and blind human beings on the other side; to have to answer the shrill voice of one's own conscience with its insistent *Why?* For at any moment one had to be ready to die with this question satisfied. And I for one could not do this with the argument of the mere accident that made me born a Belgian citizen instead of a subject of the Kaiser. Having been through this cross-examination by Death, and having finally found a satisfactory answer to that great *Why* gives one the self-confidence required for saying what one believes to be true and good, and the certainty that everything is true and good that promotes *life* and makes mankind fit for it.

So all I can say in defence of this book is that, as a record of the spiritual life of one out of millions of soldiers, it is *un livre de bonne foy*. Perhaps I am too sanguine in expecting that, with so limited a claim to the interest and perhaps even to the sympathy of the general public,

\* R. Kipling. *The Honours of War* (A Diversity of Creatures).

it will be welcomed abroad. If I dare to submit it at all to the judgment of the American public, it is because I have been struck during my stay in the United States in 1918 by the great and growing attention paid there to all aspects of war psychology. I came into contact with all sorts and conditions of people in practically every part of the Union, and my conclusion was that in no belligerent country has there been more thought given to the philosophy of war and reconstruction than in America. With the exception of a very few, mostly English writers and thinkers, nobody in Europe seems to have known any other war problem than *how to win*.

I am positive in asserting that the majority, even of young intellectuals whom I have met in Belgian and British officers' messes, have never given an hour's thought to the meaning of the war from a broader viewpoint than that of military or diplomatic operations. They knew they were fighting for their homes, for their country's independence—exactly as the Germans thought they did themselves—and that was enough. Perhaps they would not have found it so easy to die if they had begun to analyze further, for analyzing means doubting, and doubting means, at least temporarily, a weakening of the purpose. And there was to be no weakening at all if one did not want to be crushed by the "Hun."

In America it was different. It took nearly three years to bring the nation to realize that it had to take part in the war. In the meantime its leaders did the doubting and analyzing, and they ultimately came to a conclusion inspired by a broader viewpoint than that of national interest. Even after April, 1917, America as a Democracy, and to a large extent as a Democracy of cosmopolitan extraction, had to bring her own people to the realisation of the ideal issues at stake before the full effect of her intervention could be felt. Whilst the Belgians, for instance, all knew that they had to fight on the 3rd of August, 1914, because they saw their own homes and cities threatened by a brutal invader, practically every individual American had to be convinced by reasoning that he had to fight, not for his own home, but for less immediate purposes common to mankind. That is why I think I may say, without doing any injustice to my compatriots, or their European allies, that America fought with a wider consciousness of her aims than any other nation. Nor did she fight any the worse for having that consciousness!

It is this identification of America with the conscience of mankind, more even than her formidably increased economic and military power, that has made her the umpire in this war. And now the day of the Great Settlement has come, a Settlement which involves not



only the fate of empires and territories, but the social and moral regeneration of the peoples of Europe, once more we look across the Atlantic to read America's thoughts. For we need her to help us reconstruct, as much as we needed her to help us fight. We need the assistance of her capital, of her social workers, of her diplomats—but above all, we need the inspiration of her ideals.

H. DE MAN.

LONDON, April, 1919.



# I

## BEFORE THE WAR

Vous me demanderez si j'aime ma patrie.  
Oui; j'aime fort aussi l'Espagne et la Turquie.  
Je ne hais pas la Perse et je crois les Indous  
De très honnêtes gens qui boivent comme nous.  
Mais je hais les cités, les pavés et les bornes,  
Tout ce qui porte l'homme à se mettre en troupeau,  
Pour vivre entre deux murs et quatre faces mornes,  
Le front sous un moellon, les pieds sur un tombeau.

ALFRED DE MUSSET, *La Coupe et les Lèvres* (Dedication).

WHEN I joined the Belgian army as a volunteer on the 3d of August, 1914, I was much less of a citizen of my native country than of Germany, England, or France. Since the beginning of my student's career my ambition had been to become a "citizen of the world." From the age of eighteen until a short time before the war I had travelled extensively through most European countries, spent five years at German and Austrian universities, one year in England, and shorter periods in France, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, and Scandinavia. I had learned to speak and write French, German, and English with nearly the same ease as my native Flemish language. My purpose was to become acquainted with the conditions of life, the science and literature of the great European nations, and I

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do not think that many men of my age have made a greater effort to come near to the type of a world citizen, in the European sense at least than I. Even during the three years—1914 till 1917—which I spent mostly in Belgium, I continued to take more interest in international politics than in Belgian affairs. I used to read the great British, German, and French newspapers before the home product, and I do not think that more than five per cent of my library was occupied by native authors.

I want to make it quite clear at the outset that my ideal was not cosmopolitanism, but a sort of ectectic internationalism. I never felt attracted by the shallow cosmopolitanism of those who pretend to see no difference between nations, because all they see of them are a few material institutions which they have in common, whilst the higher and subtler things that differentiate them escape their notice. This is bound to happen to the traveller who judges France by what he sees of the Paris Boulevards, England by Piccadilly, Russia by the Newski Prospect, America by New York's Fifth Avenue, and less important countries by a hasty visit to their ports. This class of migratory cosmopolitans only see that superficial and in itself cosmopolitan aspect of civilisation which the Belgian nationalist writer, Edmond Picard, shrewdly called "Kellnerism." Kellnerism is as universal as the insti-

tution of the German waiter used to be. To the "Kellnerists" the world is indeed one, for a ship's cabin or a Pullman car look and smell very much the same in every part of the globe. There is no more difference between the type and manners of the people one meets in a Palace Hotel in Cairo, in Brussels or in Chicago than between the tastes of dishes one gets there. To the cosmopolitan all countries look alike. To the internationalist the world is a wonderful living mosaic, deriving its beauty from the infinite variety of national colouring. A citizen of Europe meant to me one who strives to understand and to sympathise with those characteristics of every country which are an essential element of what, as a whole, constitutes European civilisation. Therefore, in every country where I lived my passionate pursuit was to look, not for what its culture had in common with that of other nations, but for what was peculiarly its own. To grow acquainted with it meant to love it and make it part of my spiritual self. So I gradually became a French patriot, a German patriot, an English patriot, as my knowledge of French, German, and English civilisation grew more intimate. My European internationalism was based, not on a denial of nationality, but on a conscious attempt to identify myself with the spirit of several great European nations. What makes Central and Western Europe so beautiful and passionately

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interesting to my mind is its infinite variety. On this smallest of all continents—a mere peninsula stretching out beyond the Russian plains from the western extremity of Asia—humanity shows itself more diverse than anywhere else on earth, much more so even than the landscape, thanks to the continuous and intricate blending of races, languages, institutions and civilisations involved in two thousand years of invasions, migrations and wars. Yet my European patriotism was not at all exclusive of the rest of the world. On the contrary I considered it as only a step towards becoming a citizen of the world at large, which I so far only knew through literature. Walt Whitman gave me a foretaste of what it would be to love America, and Kipling more than anybody else taught me that contact with exotic civilisation was a necessary part of a white man's training.

The love of my native country played but a part in my life. It is true that, when the war broke out, I found that something in the subconscious impulses which are after all the mainspring of even an educated man's actions, was particularly associated with the land of my birth and childhood. These fundamental impulses, that really make a man what he is, can no more be obliterated by later attempts to identify oneself with the soul of other nations, than having learnt foreign languages can make one forget

the sound of the mother tongue. This sound, the images associated with it, and the instinctive likes and dislikes formed in those early years remain paramount. It takes a strong cause, which, like dreaming or death agony, releases the strings of self-consciousness, to make one realise how much more of these impulses remain present and active than one would think.

Yet although they are associated with one's native language and the recollections of childhood, they have little to do with nationality as such. They are an essential part of national feeling, but no more identical with it than are the topographical boundaries of home, or, at the utmost, of the native town, with the frontiers of the country. This is especially the case with Belgium, where several languages are spoken, and where my native Flemish tongue, or, more particularly still, my local dialect, does not identify itself with the existence of the State. So though my instinctive patriotism would link me with my home, with my family, with the customs and manners of my class, and with the aspect of the small part of the country where I received my impressions as a child, it would not do so with the country as a whole.

In so far as patriotism means attachment to the institutions and the national spirit of a country, I candidly confess that in the ordinary sense of the term, I never was much of a Belgian

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patriot. If I were asked whether the fact that I have fought for years with the Belgian army, and shared its glory and its sufferings as well as those of the whole nation, has not created a new tie between me and my countrymen, I am afraid that I could only to a limited extent answer in the affirmative. There is certainly a very strong sympathy between me and those whose sufferings I have shared, but as far as it is really a bond of feeling, that is, based on actual and personal experience, it only applies to that very small portion of the army with which I have actually been in touch, my own men, and my own comrades. On the other hand, as far as military solidarity is the outcome of conscious thinking, it is not at all confined to my own countrymen, for I naturally extend it to all soldiers who have fought for the same cause. My intellectual sympathy goes out to the poilu, the Tommy and the Sammy and all their allies, as well as to the Belgian soldier, and to every one of them in direct ratio not so much of their sufferings and their courage as of the extent to which their purpose in fighting was identical with mine. Otherwise I might include the German soldiers as well, who certainly have fought as bravely and suffered as much as most of us. But this is another story. My point for the moment is that military solidarity created by the war is either too narrow or too broad a feeling to add much strength to the



patriotism of a man who never looked upon the war from a purely national viewpoint.

The only way in which I ever felt any Belgian patriotism in the real sense of the word is by loving Belgium as a microcosm of Europe. The existence of Belgian nationality, or to put it more exactly, of a peculiar Belgian quality of civilisation, is a matter of controversy amongst historians. There is no doubt that what mostly differentiates Belgian culture from that of the neighbouring nations is local or provincial characteristics; whilst the small class who have any common characteristics beyond those, mostly derive them from French, or—in the case of a very few—from Dutch civilisation.

There is no better proof of this than the fact that most books by Belgian writers were read much less in their own country than abroad. Practically all the Belgians who wrote French had their works published in France and sold more copies of them in Paris alone than in the whole of Belgium. The Flemish writers did the same in Holland. The reputation of our French writers was made in Paris, that of the Flemings in Holland, before they attained any popularity in their native land. Even certain translations into German found more readers in Teutonic countries and helped more to advertise their authors in Belgium itself than their original publications had done at home. Pirenne's "History

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of Belgium," the standard work of Belgian neo-nationalism, was published in a German translation and popularised beyond the Rhine before it attracted any notice in Belgium; and the excellent German translation of Verhaeren's poems by Stefan Zweig had made the greatest French writing poet of pre-war Belgium more popular in Germany than in his own country.

The lack of a national culture in Belgium, however, proves nothing against Belgium's right to exist as a State. State and nationality are two different things. Switzerland is another instance of a State, formed of fragments of nationalities, strongly united by their attachment to a common political organisation which has for centuries safeguarded their existence, under conditions derived from the peculiar natural situation of the country and the uniform economic mode of living that has resulted therefrom. In spite of what I have said above, I do not in the least agree with those who consider that Belgium as a State is an artificial creation of professional diplomacy. There is no doubt anyhow that the great majority of Belgians, Flemish or Walloon, consider the maintenance of the State as an essential guarantee for the conservation of certain things, and especially the freedom of their local and provincial institutions, which are dear to them. But these things have very little to do with nationality as a cultural value. The culture

of the Walloons, and of those educated Flemings who use French as their usual language, links them with France and the Latin world; whilst that of the mass of the Flemings unites them with the Dutch (who speak the same language) and the Teutonic races.

What they have in common, and what constitutes the essence of Belgian patriotism, is their attachment to certain civic institutions and a certain civic spirit. These institutions are the outcome of living for centuries, in spite of different language and culture, under similar economic, political and religious conditions; and this civic spirit results from centuries of struggling in common for the defence of these institutions against continuous attempts at absorption by the great neighbouring powers.

The only plausible theory of Belgian patriotism is that which bases it on those common conditions and common sufferings, and not on the existence of a distinctive and peculiar national culture, which is a myth. These conditions arise from the situation of Belgium as a natural gateway between the three great currents of economic and cultural life in Western Europe—Latin, Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon. They have made it racially the melting pot, economically the turning plate, militarily the battlefield, politically the buffer state, and spiritually the microcosm of Europe.

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In a small country like Belgium, with less than a century's existence as an independent state, and no unity of language or culture based thereon, this universal aspect of Belgium's function as an element in the progress of European civilisation is the only intellectual justification of patriotic feeling. It is the theoretical foundation of the writings of Henri Pirenne, and the essential inspiration of our great poet, Emile Verhaeren, to whom Belgium stood as the symbol of the intensive life of the modern industrial world.

The only sense in which Belgian patriotism as a cultural value ever appealed to me, was through my appreciation of its historical function in the ensemble of European civilisation, and through my admiration for the skilful activity of its artisans and traders, the tenacious devotion to local and provincial independence of its historical heroes, the broad universal vision of its great exponents in art and literature, by which it strove to fulfil this function since the early Middle Ages. The more I loved my country in this wide sense the more I was led to value and venerate the culture of the nations between whom Belgium was the hyphen. Being a Belgian was thus only a step towards becoming a European.

So, on the one hand, I was far from believing, like so many pre-war socialists and to-day's

Bolsheviki, in what the Austrian, Otto Bauer (the first to attempt a scientific analysis of nationality from a socialist viewpoint), calls the naïve cosmopolitanism which characterises the earlier sentimental stages of socialism. But, on the other hand, I was equally far from allowing my sense of nationality to lead me to jingoism or political nationalism, which consists in the belief that one's own nationality has rights which the others have not. I was always as disgusted by the misuse of patriotism, as a feeling of attachment to a particular type of civilisation, for the fostering of political enmity against other nations, and promoting militarism and imperialism, as I was by the prostitution of religious feeling to the purposes of worldly domination. I was convinced that there should be the same difference between patriotism and the State as there is—or ought to be—between religion and the Church. Love of one's own country need not involve any hostility towards another country. On the contrary, if it be sincere and enlightened, it should tend to strengthen the ties of sympathy between them. Real patriotism has an inherent tendency to become universal, just as love of individual men and women helps one to love mankind.

It is true that patriotism involves a desire to maintain the political autonomy of a nation and the peculiar institutions which are an element of

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its cultural life, and which may be threatened by attack from abroad. As long as no trust can be placed in international institutions to make such an attack impossible or fruitless, a patriot will have to be prepared to defend his country. But this does not mean that patriotism justifies any and every sort of war. On the contrary if the only patriots were those who refused to fight save in defence of their country, there would be no wars at all—for lack of aggressors. But this can only be if each people knows the true relation in which it stands towards other nations. Have we not seen in 1914, as often before, a war begin between nations, which were all told by their rulers that they were fighting in self-defence and moreover believed it. For I have no doubt that the great mass of the people of the Central Powers were from the beginning convinced that they were fighting to defend their country against the aggression of a wicked foe intent on their extermination. So easy is it to use the disguise of patriotism for the aggressive purposes of commercial avidity, the pride of a military caste, or the ambitions of a dynasty.

Yet my training as a historian had put me on my guard against a too subjective or too absolute outlook on things. In consequence I did not feel towards war in general in the same way as those who probably formed the most numerous class of pacifists. I would call them the ethical

pacifists, for their hatred of war—not any war in particular, but war in general, at all times, under any circumstances, and from the viewpoint of any of the belligerents—is based on the ethical principle that no man should kill a man. Their most consistent exponents are the Christian non-resisters of the Tolstoian type.

My hatred of war was based more on history than on ethics. But, indeed, can individual ethics be sound if they come into conflict with the laws of social progress? Sound ethics must aim at making mankind fitter to live. This can only be achieved by social progress, that is to say, by evolving forms of human organisation, and civilisation which are better adapted to assist human society in its struggle with hostile forces of nature. History teaches us that this evolution is not a logical, but a dialectical process. I mean, it is realised, not by straight linear development starting from one cause towards one aim, but by a continuous struggle between individuals, classes, tribes, nations, races, according to their own conflicting interests and ideals. Progress consists in the victory of the form of organisation that is fittest to survive, because it proves better adapted to the fulfilment of human needs under given natural circumstances and to the development of material and moral resources. Wars, like revolutions, racial, class and religious con-

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flicts, have been one of the agencies through which this dialectical process is accomplished.

We may conceive of a state of things where humanity will have escaped the iron necessity that has so far condemned it to the sufferings and waste of energy this dialectical process involves. The great exponent of scientific socialism, Karl Marx, has referred to this possibility as "the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom." This is subject to the condition that humanity (or a sufficiently important part of it to be able to manage without interference from the other more backward parts) should take real control of its common destinies, solidarise its class and national interests, and achieve by a common conscious will what is now the result of internal strife. We are still so far from this ideal that we have hardly begun to discern the laws which govern our social life and conflicts. Even our boldest attempts at interfering, either by legislation or by freely organised initiative, with the laws that govern the production and distribution of wealth, do not go beyond the surface of things. And as to the relations between nations or states, at present our most optimistic expectations are not that we shall see the white race governing itself as a whole according to the rules of its own will and reason; but that we shall perhaps be able to create machinery for gradually replacing war by arbitration and con-



ciliation. In other words, we cannot hope as yet to make conflicts superfluous or impossible, but only to facilitate their solution by the peaceful establishment of an international court of justice to prevent recourse to actual violence.

Far, then, though we be from this "realm of freedom," there is no doubt that it is the ultimate aim of all our conscious efforts, as well as the logical outcome of the increasing power over nature which the unlimited development of human resources gives us. All great religious movements, as well as democracy and socialism, are moving towards that aim, though by different paths. Religious and ethical movements generally strive towards human unity through reforming individual ethics; political and social movements, through reforming the exterior conditions under which men live and which again mainly determine this ethical attitude. Ethical movements as such have failed so far either because they ignored the influence of material conditions, or else because (when they interfered with them through conquering political and social power) they lost sight of their original ethical aims and led to intolerance and oppression of freedom.

Democracy ultimately leads to self-government of mankind as a whole; at least, it is the only instrument by which such self-government can be freely and consciously achieved.

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Socialism aims at making the moral unity of humanity possible by giving society, or some form of organisation which represents the common interest, control over those means of productive ownership of which by private capitalists now creates an antagonism of interests which makes the hostility between social classes deeper even than that between states.

It is probably through a combination of these three great forces—Christianity, acting on individuals, democracy and socialism, on the political and the economic conditions of life, that we shall get nearer to the ideal of a humanity which, according to Faust's vision of the future, will enjoy "not safety against nature, perhaps, but activity and freedom."

In the meantime, however, we are still in the "realm of necessity," and any attempt to ignore its laws, by giving individual men ethical directions independent of the conditions under which they live and which it is not in their power to alter single-handed, is doomed to failure. This inadequacy of the means of the ethical pacifists to the end they have in view, as exemplified by Mr. Henry Ford's adventure with his "Peace Ship," is the tragi-comical expression of this logical impossibility.

Experience then has shown that purposes like those of the pacifists who wanted to make all wars impossible could not be obtained by mere at-

tempts to reform the ethics of individuals. For the latter live in a world where the material conditions of the antagonism of interests between classes and states—originating in the economic structure of society—still rule the actions of men. There have been situations where those whose ideal was the stopping of bloodshed between men have yet had to resort to bloodshed in civil or national war, as the only means of furthering the realisation of their ideal. What democrat of to-day, if he had lived in France in 1792, would not have been one of the hundreds of thousands that answered the call of “la patrie est en danger” by taking up arms for the defence of the young republic against the champions of divine right? Was not the duty of Americans who loved freedom equally clear in the Civil War? And in 1914 and 1917, was it not to fight for peace that men took up arms against the main and immediate menace that threatened it from Germany? Have we not seen, in the first glorious months of the Russian Revolution, such men as the Marxian Plekhanoff, the humanitarian socialist Kerensky, the gentle anarchist-dreamer Prince Kropotkine—who had all repudiated the Czar’s war for Constantinople—preach the crusade of republican Russia fighting to defend her new freedom against German and Austrian invasion, and even carrying, by an offensive resembling those of French revolutionary strategy

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in 1792 and 1793, the flag of liberty into the enemy's lands?

If we may judge by results, these lovers of peace, who were not afraid of fighting for the realisation of their ideals, or at least of certain conditions essential to their realisation, have done more to bring humanity nearer to a state of things where there will be no more wars than have our milk-and-water pacifists, those bleating lambs in a world of ravening wolves. Consistent ethical pacifists, who applied the logical conclusion of their principles, and actively opposed any warlike activity, such as conscientious objectors and other martyrs of a forlorn cause, may at least have achieved the moral result of stirring consciences that could only be roused by such loud protests. But most of the others have not even the sentimental excuse of having been demonstratively and heroically passive. By declining to take sides when millions of men were engaged in a deadly struggle for the maintenance of institutions which are vital to the progress of democracy and the triumph of peace; by striving to weaken the purpose of those who fought; by threatening to spoil them of the results of their sacrifices through advocating an untimely peace of compromise, they have done more harm to their own cause than any promoter of war and militarism could have done. They have justified the indictment of the exponent of active pacifism,

Bertrand Russell,\* who describes this class of people as "those whose impulsive nature is more or less atrophied," and concludes as follows:

"In spite of all destruction which is wrought by the impulses that lead to war, there is more hope for a nation which has these impulses than for a nation in which all impulse is dead. Impulse is the expression of life, and while it exists there is hope of its turning towards life instead of towards death; but lack of impulse is death, and out of death no new life will come."

Here we touch the bottom of the problem. The difference between this class of pacifism and my own is not so much a discrepancy of thinking as an antagonism of temperament. With my natural impulses of activity and combativeness, I was, as a pacifist, temperamentally bound to become either a fanatic conscientious objector or a crusader against Prussian militarism.

What saved me from being the former, was not only the intellectual disposition which I largely ascribe to my historical training, but also and primarily my native realism, inherited from generations of Flemish ancestors. Centuries of a prosperous, active and free life as artisans and traders have given the Flemish mind a very marked disposition to concrete thinking, just as they have made their temperament sensual and their philosophic outlook materialistic. It seems

\* Bertrand Russell, *Why Men Fight*, pp. 16 and 17.

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as though to live as *homines forti et bene nutriti* on a rich soil gives men that faculty for grasping and expressing realities which has made the Flemings traditionally excel in all plastic arts; in descriptive literature; sciences, as anatomy, medicine, botany, which require observation rather than speculation. For the Flemings show a distinct inability in abstract thinking, and therefore cut a poor figure in philosophy and speculative sciences in general. Abstract science, in the same way as music, seems to thrive better on a meagre soil, and to appeal most to the minds of peoples who, either through lack of natural resources or through oppression, are denied the satisfaction of driving their roots deep down into the friendly earth. Be that as it may, I think I am not far wrong when in looking for the fundamental impulses of my actions, I ascribe the realistic nature of my idealism to the practical turn of mind which is in my race.

In fact, I believe that my opposition to war rested, before 1914, not so much on the grounds that war in itself was wrong but that it was a wrong means to the end I had in view. This end I would call Socialism—were I not afraid to lay myself open to misunderstandings by accepting without immediate detailed definition a label which covers so many different goods.

But I hope it will be clear to the reader by now that I am trying to explain my actions not so

much by intellectual reasoning as by the impulses which determined them. Reasoning served mostly to test the strength of impulses, to sift them and summon up other impulses to counteract those that appeared hostile to my general purpose. Therefore, to comprehend my attitude in August, 1914, and later, a detailed preliminary description of my political views and ideals is as irrelevant as an understanding of the temperamental impulses which led to them is essential.

My social ideals and my social activities, then, were mainly determined by the following causes:

Instinctive sympathy with the under-dog, the result of a certain chivalrous disposition which is probably partly hereditary and partly cultivated by fatherly education. An intense love of life and capacity for happiness, which, combined with this chivalrous disposition, found an outlet in the active desire to make others happy, and especially to communicate to them the knowledge which I owed to my education as a "privileged-born." A certain capacity for intellectual enthusiasm which made me, from the age of adolescence, disgusted with the crudely materialistic and egoistic outlook of my class—and, more especially, with the indeed very low moral and intellectual level of the wealthy classes in my native city—and which at the same time awakened my sympathy with any movement that, like Belgian

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socialism, had a strong idealistic and artistic appeal. A constructive turn of the imagination which made my mind receptive to schemes and ideals of social regeneration (my first socialist ideals had a purely utopian character, and my text-books were the writings of William Morris). A combative temperament, which irresistibly drove me to action for the realisation of the ideals thus conceived; a desire for authority, responsibility and command, which still more intimately linked up my will and my ambition with the social movements towards which my combative instincts had driven me.

These impulses, good or bad, are still mine. But the war has considerably changed the direction and aim of the will in which they resulted.



## II

### THE COLLAPSE OF THE "INTERNATIONALE"

There is no stir, or walking in the streets,  
And the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.

SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Cæsar*, I, 3.

ON the 1st of August, 1914, I witnessed the mobilisation in Brussels at dawn, and in Paris that same afternoon. The memory of that afternoon remains particularly vivid in my mind. The weather was hot and sultry, there was not a breath of air, nature itself seemed to be waiting in suspense. Huge clouds of a lurid sulphurous colour threatened thunder, which never came. Shortly after noon, they so darkened part of the sky that they gave the light a crepuscular gloom, which cast an uncanny opalescent reflection on the faces of the crowd. Men and women walked about almost in silence with the ghostlike detachment of people who have suddenly lost their own volition and henceforth obey the will of a fate which they do not understand, but the hostility of which is brought home to them by everything around them. A slight, but insistent and nauseous smell, the breath of a great overcrowded city in the hot, still air, permeated the atmosphere,

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as though stealing up from some vast hidden putrefaction. Everybody seemed to be labouring under the sensation that, although people were quiet and behaved normally, the visible world was no longer the real world. There was a great invisible Presence, boding unimaginable suffering, that controlled the most trivial word and the most ordinary gesture.

I remember most distinctly how acutely I felt this when I was sitting down to supper, on the evening of the first of August in the stuffy back-room of a little Paris restaurant, with Renaudel, Cachin, and a couple of other French Socialists, together with Hermann Müller, the delegate of the German Social-Democrats, and Camille Huysmans, the secretary of the International Socialist Bureau. After the strain of a long meeting, which was to be resumed after supper, we talked detachedly and almost jokingly about indifferent things. We were trying to forget what had brought us together, and that Jean Jaurès, the gigantic mind and will whom we had looked up to as the only power that might still have averted the catastrophe, had been shot dead the evening before, after supping like we were in a little Paris restaurant and talking good-humouredly to his friends. The drawn, pale face and the tired suffering eyes of Renaudel, whose devotion to Jaurès was dog-like, suddenly struck me again and belied the reality of any-

thing he said, of anything he might even have thought at that time, as we sat talking about things that might have mattered two days earlier, but that did not matter any more. My mind then saw Jaurès as I had seen him three days before at the historic international mass meeting in Brussels. I had shuddered then when I heard him, at the climax of his almost superhuman eloquence, conjure up the vision of two loving young human beings walking together in the evening gloom, unsuspecting of the menace of death which was already hanging over them like a vast thundercloud. We were now all in the shadow of that cloud.

Again the only real thing seemed to be that peculiar smell, which I shall always associate with the memory of mobilisation, for the odour of the stifling city was blended with the sour stench of barracks, coming from old cloth stored in close places, and leather greased long ago. It reminded one of the savage perfume of some feline beast, and seemed to call forth by association the ancestral, almost forgotten killing instincts of men. It was now carried about everywhere by the men who were being claimed again by the barracks and the camps, and who filled the streets, the public places, the cars and trains with their gaily coloured, but weary figures.

The acuteness of these impressions was mainly owing to the overexcitement of one's fatigued

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nerves. To this was due one's painful supersensitiveness, the hysterically hilarious twist of the mouth, the vacant stare which I have since so often seen on the faces of soldiers under the cloud of death that was then lowering.

The strain of my work during those last days of July might indeed have accounted for tired nerves. I had taken part in the last attempts of the "Internationale," whose seat was in Brussels, to prevent a European war. An endeavour to hold a meeting of the International Socialist Young People's Federation, one of the bodies that were in the best position to act, and of which I was president, was frustrated at the last moment because the Austrians, represented by Danneberg, and the Germans, represented by Karl Liebknecht, could not find means to leave their country. But the International Socialist Bureau met at Brussels on July 26th, 27th and 28th, in the reading-room of the Workers' Education Institute, of which I was then the director. Along with Camille Huysmans, I acted as an interpreter. As French, German and English were used, every speech had to be translated into two languages, a procedure even more tiring for the interpreter than tiresome for the audience. It was one of the best-spirited meetings of the International Socialist Bureau which I ever attended. The goodwill of the representatives of the great labour organisations of Europe to

attempt anything that might still be attempted to prevent a general conflagration was evident. The personal relations amongst delegates of different nations were excellent. I can still see the German Haase, with his hand on Jaurès' shoulder, bent with him over the draft of a resolution which they were going to move together, and which was to be a last joint appeal to the labour organisations of all countries, to bring the full pressure of their power to bear upon their governments. Two days later, Jaurès was assassinated. Six days later, before a Reichstag delirious with warlike enthusiasm, after having listened to the Chancellor's announcement of the invasion of Belgium, Haase read the famous statement of the Social-Democratic Party in favour of the war credits. Little did we suspect on the 28th, how quickly and thoroughly the Internationale of Labour was to be disrupted by bloodshed and treason.

Yet the very goodwill and brotherly spirit of this meeting made it all the more evident that its impotence to originate any real action was due to an inherent vice of the Internationale itself and not to any personal shortcomings of its leaders.

The International Socialist and Labour Congresses, and the International Socialist Bureau that was their executive organ, had never been more than federative bodies, linking up autono-

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mous national organisations for purposes of mutual help and information. This so-called Second Internationale, whose origin dates back to 1889, was very different from the first Internationale, which existed from 1864 till 1872. The latter was a real fighting organisation with a central direction, and with a leader—Karl Marx—directing the activity of its national sections. It could thus be centralised, for at that time the socialist movement was still in its propagandist stage. In no country had it attained sufficient power to form a constant and responsible element of national life. It mostly consisted of debating clubs, more or less sectarian societies for propaganda, or organisations for the promotion and conduct of sporadic and short-lived strikes. Such a movement might well receive its inspiration from the unique international centre by whose propaganda it had in fact been created.

The Second Internationale, however, corresponded to a quite different stage of development. It arose from the desire of national organisations, which after the Franco-Prussian War had sprung up and attained a certain amount of influence in most European countries, to get in touch with each other. The direction of its development was centripetal, whilst that of the first Internationale had been centrifugal. And when, after a few years, the Second Internationale had attained a certain degree of cohe-

sion, this was found to be much less strong than the cohesion of labour unions or socialist parties of a particular country with their own national environment. It had been easy enough for the early agitators to conduct their propaganda along the lines of a cosmopolitan doctrine, but it was quite another matter to adapt this doctrine to different national conditions, for this meant to organise, to gain a permanent influence on the settlement of labour conditions, on the legislation and administration of a country, and to accept, in some way or another, a gradually growing amount of responsibility in the conduct of that country's public business.

Thus the Labour Unions and political parties which formed the Second Internationale, had to adapt themselves to the peculiar spirit of the institutions and the public mind of their respective countries, and even to accept a certain amount of national solidarity with their ruling powers. The more national movements thus increased their strength and influence in their own sphere, the less were they prepared to receive directions from abroad. This explains why, in great European countries with a powerful labour movement, like England or Germany, the Internationale was of little practical account, whilst in countries where the movement was still in its sectarian or propagandist stage, like Russia or the Balkan states, its resolutions were still an article of faith

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and a subject of exegesis. The Second Internationale, moreover, practically always respected the national autonomy of the affiliated organisations and never tried to become more than an organism for mutual information, voluntary assistance and free coordination. Its leaders knew too well that it was not equipped for action beyond that programme. Unfortunately, however, they acted towards the outside world as though it were so equipped and thus created expectations amongst the masses which they were unable to fulfil when the test of action came. This may be explained either by the natural propensity of the leaders of the International Bureau to put this organisation in the limelight and inflate its importance, or by the equally natural desire of the national movements to augment their influence at home by adding to their actual strength the prestige of a powerful international organisation always ready to back them. Anyway, there had been of late years a fatal disposition to create the impression, especially as regards the prevention of war, that the Internationale as a body would be capable of decisive action. As a matter of fact, very little attention was paid to examining the concrete conditions of such action, whilst all efforts were concentrated on the demonstrative effect of the announcements that were to make it appear probable. Hence the habit, which had of late become a tradition at International confer-



ences, to escape the discussion of profound disagreements which would have made the choice of common tactics impossible, and mask their existence by the concoction and mostly unanimous adoption of vague but lengthy resolutions.

It is not because it could not prevent war, but because after letting the world believe that it would do so, it proved unable even to attempt it, that one may speak not only of the failure, but of the moral bankruptcy of the Second Internationale.

It was so evident that its executive bodies had no real power whatever to throw into the balance of peace and war, for lack of constitutional means of coercion of the affiliated organisations, that the possibility of international action, beyond the issuing of a manifesto, was not even discussed at the July conference. The manifesto itself could be no more than an appeal to the national organisations to do their duty in their respective countries, with the means which they would see fit to use.

I could not help being struck, at this conference, with the pitiful attitude of the Austrian and Bohemian delegates, whose country at that time was forcing on the war against Serbia. Especially the late Victor Adler, the leader of the German Austrians, and the Bohemian delegates, Nemeč and Soukup, seemed almost physically prostrated. I remember hearing Nemeč com-

plaining most discouragingly about what he called the physical impossibility for the socialists to do anything once mobilisation had been declared. In old happy-go-lucky Austria, whose government Victor Adler himself had once described as "despotism, tempered by slovenliness," people had been used, even amidst the turmoil of the most violent racial and political strife, to a certain almost immoral "Gemütlichkeit," the result of which was that nobody ever seemed to take anything seriously. But a serious thing had happened at last—war. The government, which was always on the verge of crumbling to pieces, had all of a sudden become a power that disposed of the life and property of all its citizens. Even the most radical elements were struck with amazement and awe when they saw how the huge cruel machinery of mobilisation began to move. Nemeč, the old leader of the Bohemian socialists, seemed actually to be struck with physical terror. I remember how, for some unexplained reason, he kept lamenting about the fact that the horses and vans of the transport service of their daily paper, *Pravo Lidu*, had been requisitioned by the army, as though this particular circumstance were any worse than the suspension of all constitutional liberties by the state of siege. I think he told me this story about four times, with such evident signs of discouragement that as far as he was concerned this incident did obviously away

with any inclination to oppose the Government's policy. In the light of subsequent events, I have often remembered this, and especially after the attitude of the German and Austrian Social-Democrats had set me thinking that lack of individual courage might be one of the main causes of their passive attitude. The mere fact of the destruction of the party machine by the mobilisation must have appeared to these men, who relied on the material strength of their organisation rather than on the revolutionary spirit of their membership, as the annihilation of all power and therefore as an excuse for non-resistance. Four years later, the same psychological disposition of the German people was to account for their sudden acquiescence in defeat once the military machine had run down.

The last attempt to coordinate the action of the socialist parties, before the final breakdown of all relations, was Hermann Müller's journey to Paris on August 1st, with Camille Huysmans and myself.

When I got up that morning, I little expected that I should be in Paris in the afternoon. I felt so tired after the hard work of the previous days, that I had made up my mind to take a day's complete rest. I was to go fishing in the country, my usual way of relieving tired nerves. Besides, I felt that there were some more terrible days ahead, and I wanted a day's isolation to let my

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thoughts settle down a bit and make myself intellectually fit for the tasks to come.

As a consequence of the declaration of "danger of war" in Germany the day before, the general mobilisation of the Belgian army had been announced that night by the sounding of church bells and by bugle calls in the streets soon after midnight. I found it easy to get up at dawn, for there was little sleep to be had any way. In the streets and on the trolley-car that was to take me to the railroad station I must have cut a funny figure, with my sporting attire, rod and basket, standing like a phantom of bygone peaceful times amongst the crowds of reservists who were hastening towards the camps and barracks. Yet I was determined to have my day's rest, and I was in the habit of sticking to that purpose in spite of everything once I had resolved it to be necessary. But at the station I learned from the newspapers that Jean Jaurès had been murdered in Paris the night before. I immediately decided to return home. I felt that the time was over when one could rest and think and live as before. I realised instinctively that now the great hostile Fate which so far had only been a menace, had struck mankind. There was to be no more individual willing, we were all to be thrown into the whirlpool of the great Madness. Now the first blood had flowed, the spell of suspense was broken.

Objectively speaking, the coincidence of the assassination of Jaurès with the other international events may have been an accident. Up to now, it is not known whether his murderer was the instrument of a French jingo plot, of a German intrigue or of some machination of Czarism, to which Jaurès' insistence on a purely defensive policy was disagreeable. Perhaps he was simply a weak-headed man driven to insanity by the chauvinist press. But whether the crime was due to purpose or chance, later events made it appear, what intuition at the time had made me feel it to be. The deadly shot that rang out in the rue du Croissant that Friday night was to call forth a thundering echo all over the world, and arouse the Beast of War.

The diary of my wife, to whom I told the news immediately on my return home, and who received it with tears—not the last tears she was to weep these four years—bears witness that she had the same intuition. The murder of him who was certainly the greatest individual power arrayed against war was a symbolic blow. The last chance of peace had gone.

Soon afterwards I received a call from Camille Huysmans, who asked me to accompany him to Paris with Hermann Müller, the secretary of the German Social-Democratic Party, who had unexpectedly arrived in Brussels that morning. Müller, whom I had known for years, had been

delegated by the Executive of his party to get in touch with the French Socialists and labour leaders and report himself back in Berlin before the meeting of the Reichstag that was to be held on Tuesday, the 4th. We decided that, if there were the least chance of a delay on his return journey, I should also go to Berlin, if necessary by Switzerland, whilst Müller would travel back by Belgium or Holland, so that there would be two chances of reaching Berlin. I am glad that this proved unnecessary and that Müller found it comparatively easy to get back in time—in fact, he was in Berlin on Monday—for otherwise I should probably have spent the duration of the war in a German internment camp.

Contradictory accounts of Müller's mission have been published since. German and pro-German papers have accused the French Socialists of having received Müller with demonstrations of national hatred, and not even treated him fairly in their personal relations. On the other side, Müller has been represented as having tried to induce the French Socialists to vote against the war credits under the false pretence that the German Social-Democrats were going to act in the same way, this abominable treachery being part of a plan of German imperialism to disorganise resistance abroad.

Both versions are untrue. As I remained with Müller all the time he spent in Paris, and inter-

preted everything that was said at the two conferences we had there, I can vouch for the correctness of the following account.

Immediately after our arrival, Müller was received by the leaders of the French Socialist party. We first met in a room of the Chamber of Deputies, and after adjournment for supper, in the office of the paper *l'Humanité*. The reception Müller was given, both officially and personally, was as cordial as could be.

Müller began by declaring that he had been sent for the purpose of mutual information. The executive of the German Social-Democratic party wanted to inform the French Socialists of the real state of affairs in Germany, and at the same time gather information about the probable attitude of the French Socialist deputies on the vote of the war credits. This was in view of the meeting of the Social-Democratic members of the Reichstag which was to precede the full meeting of the House on Tuesday, the 4th.

Müller laid much stress on the fact that he could not officially commit his party, for neither the executive committee nor the members of the Reichstag had met since the situation had become critical. He could not give any information about what might have happened in Germany since Friday morning, when he had left Berlin. Yet he warned us against a too pessi-

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mistic interpretation of the attitude of the imperial government; he said that the "state of danger of war" was a comparatively harmless step, and much less far-reaching than general mobilisation. He added that he knew nothing of the mobilisation of the German army, the rumour of which had reached Paris that morning. As Haase had done in Brussels three days before, he insisted on the importance of the recent socialist peace demonstrations in Berlin, and gave us to understand that the government, or at least the Imperial Chancellor, had viewed them with sympathy, and on the whole seemed rather inclined to encourage the anti-war demonstrations of the Social-Democrats.

I am to this day convinced that Müller and Haase both showed genuine candour in taking the "friendliness" of the Chancellor for granted. This judgment is based not only on my knowledge of the personal character of these two men, but on my opinion that excessive credulity towards the government was indeed characteristic of the state of mind of the German Social-Democrats in those days. It is hardly necessary to say that this in my opinion is no excuse, for lack of discernment coupled with lack of courage would be anything but an extenuating circumstance.

When seeking a psychological explanation, however, one should keep in mind that the Ger-



man Social-Democrats were used to being treated like dogs by the ruling powers. They were systematically kept out of all responsible positions, whether in the imperial or the local government. There were no social relations of any description between the Social-Democrats and the representatives of the ruling classes. It was notorious, for instance, that a Social-Democrat belonging to the bourgeoisie could not marry a woman of his class, unless she were a foreigner or a Jewess—that is to say, another social outlaw. So when suddenly the Social-Democratic leaders found that they were no longer bullied, and that even the Imperial Chancellor graciously condescended to talk to them and, seemingly taking them in his confidence, gave them to understand that he considered them as partners in his game, they could not help feeling flattered. People such as these were naturally inclined to believe things which favoured the sense of their own importance. This is, probably, the main reason why the Social-Democratic leaders genuinely believed that the Chancellor, and apparently the Kaiser, too, were trying, with their assistance, to maintain peace.

I never had any doubt that Müller was equally sincere when he represented his party as prepared to vote against the war credits. He said that in no case did they intend to vote for them. "Dass man für die Kriegskredite stimmt, das

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halte ich für ausgeschlossen," were his own words. There were only two appreciable currents of opinion amongst the leaders of his party, those in favour of voting *against* the war credits, and those who advocated abstention from voting. The latter, however, seemed to him to be a minority.

During the discussion a French Socialist deputy asked what would happen if one of the countries involved in the conflict were invaded by surprise. Would there not then be a case of self-defence that would justify the vote of the war credits in the country thus attacked?

Müller answered that he thought this hypothesis highly improbable. He based his opinion on the traditional view of the German Social-Democrats, as often expressed by August Bebel, that modern wars result from general causes of economic competition between imperialist powers and that the responsibility for them rests on the ruling classes of all countries. Consequently, the obsolete distinction which some socialists still try to make between the attacking power and the attacked would most probably be impossible to make now. He added that the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 had shown how easy it is for the governments on both sides to represent the enemy as the attacking power, whilst the truth about diplomatic events usually does not become known until all is over. Nevertheless, Müller

said that should, for instance, Russian Cossacks undertake a surprise attack on Eastern Germany without any provocation on the German side, there would probably be made out a case of self-defence that would compel the German Social-Democrats to allow their government the necessary means to repulse the invasion. We should not, however, base our probable policy, he concluded, on a hypothesis of this sort, but rather on the assumption that it would not be possible to make the necessary distinction between the aggressors and the others. Therefore it would be desirable for the socialists in all countries to adopt a uniform policy.

It soon became apparent that the French Socialists at that time were practically unanimous in considering that the attitude of the French Government left no doubt as to its intention to maintain peace, and, if it should come to the worst, to remain on the defensive. Müller was given numerous facts to prove this. Renaudel told him how Jaurès successfully endeavoured to make the French Cabinet influence Russia in a sense favourable to the peaceful solution of the Austro-Serbian conflict. Reference was also made to the fact, which has since provoked a good deal of comment, that by order of the government the French troops were being withdrawn to a distance of several miles from the frontier, as an evidence of their defensive intentions and

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wish to avoid provocation. So it seemed unlikely that France should play any other part than of an attacked country, therefore the French Socialists did not contemplate voting against the war credits. Part of them, however, might favour abstention, to demonstrate their refusal to accept any responsibility for the consequences of a system of competitive armaments which they had always opposed. The conclusion, as drawn by the chairman of the conference, was that abstention from voting in every country was the only means by which the Socialists could maintain a uniform attitude towards the war credits, if circumstances at the time of the vote made such uniformity appear desirable. As Müller had no authority to give or accept any pledges, it remained well understood that both socialist parties would act as they thought fit, in the light of the "mutual information" resulting from Müller's journey.

The effect of Müller's statements could only be an inducement for the French Socialists to rely on the influence of the German Social-Democrats with the imperial government, and to refuse the vote of the war credits or at least abstain from voting for them. This purpose fitted so well into the general plan of Germany to disorganise and demoralise her opponents whilst she was herself collecting all her forces for a supreme blow, that the suspicion that Müller had acted as

the tool of the government or of a party already an accomplice to it, arose quite naturally. I dare say, at that time, none of the French Socialists who heard Müller felt any doubt about the honesty of his purpose. But when a few months later the facts of the case became public as a consequence of an indiscretion from the German side, things were viewed in a different light. In spite of all appearances, I am still convinced there was never any foul play intended. I admit I may err in my belief that Müller was too honest a man to have lent himself to such despicable felony, and that the party executive which sent him was, to my knowledge, not clever enough to conceive it. This is a matter of purely personal judgment. But there are facts to show that the views expressed by Müller on the 1st of August were identical with those held by the leaders of German Social-Democracy, at least up to the time when he left Berlin. They were quite in the line of the party traditions for several years. The change that made the Social Democrats act in an entirely different way three days later occurred during those critical days between Müller's departure from Berlin on the 30th of July and his return on the 3rd of August.

Some of my friends think I should not be simple enough to believe that a German may be anything but a scoundrel, and that it is a mistaken sense of fairness to accept the possibility of any

hypothesis that may be used as an excuse for the attitude of German Social-Democracy. Yet I persist in my judgment. I also think that it provides no excuse whatever for the German socialists. The matter with Germany was something far worse, as I realised soon afterwards, than the wickedness of individual men; and my judgment of the failure of German Social-Democracy would be more lenient than it is now, were I to admit that it was sold by treacherous leaders.

In the same way I should think better than I do of the German nation as a whole if I believed that the Kaiser's responsibility were as colossal as one would gather from a study of contemporary history in the "movie" theatres. The more we use fairness in our judgment of individual men and particular events or circumstances, the more severe our indictment of the system will be. And it is to eradicate that system that we set out on a righteous war—and won it.

The story of how, after an arduous and adventurous journey, during which we were arrested and escaped once, were arrested again, and released after being treated rather roughly by a crowd at Maubeuge, how we finally had to cross the Franco-Belgian frontier on foot under the eye of French gendarmes, does not belong here. We reached Brussels on Sunday afternoon, and there received the assurance that Müller would

be back in Berlin in time. I therefore decided not to accompany him any further and saw him off at the Brussels station. When we shook hands on parting, the last connecting link between the socialists of the two groups of powers was severed.

I had told Müller that I would be glad to act again as a liaison agent if the war broke out and circumstances made it necessary to establish relations between French and German socialists. For I still thought as a citizen of a neutral country. I had indeed considered the possibility of Belgium being dragged into the whirlpool, but I was too absorbed by what was happening among the great Powers to devote much consideration to what might occur at home. I little suspected, on my parting with Müller, that three days later I should be marching towards the front as a rifleman in a Belgian volunteer brigade.

### III

#### NINETEEN-FOURTEEN

When the torrent sweeps the man against a boulder, you must expect him to scream, and you need not be surprised if the scream is sometimes a theory.

R. L. STEVENSON, *Virginibus Puerisque*.

ON the morning of the 3rd of August, it became known that the Belgian Government had refused to consider the proposal made by Berlin the night before, for the passage of the German armies on their march against France. The invasion of Belgium began immediately. I was called to arms for garrison duty as a private in the home militia. But I made up my mind that it was my duty to do the best I could to help my country repulse the invasion. As I was a good marksman and a fair all-round athlete, this meant more than what I might do with the militia. So I decided to volunteer for service in an active infantry regiment. I enlisted the same afternoon.

Although I believed at the time that my decision was the outcome of careful reflection—and in fact, I did as much intensive and serious thinking as time and circumstances would permit—I realised later that I had obeyed sentiment rather than thought. One may imagine he is listening



to his intellect in a mental crisis like the one I went through those days, but intellect itself does nothing then but voice the deeper impulses of instinct and temperament. It was not possible to be confronted by a situation so suddenly and so fundamentally different from anything to which my ideas were accustomed, and yet expect the machinery of the mind to act coolly and smoothly as if nothing had changed but certain premises of a logical process.

To most of my countrymen, as to most Frenchmen or Germans at that time, this meant simply to be carried away by the wave of patriotism that swept their country. There was, however, nothing of the sort in my case. I both thought and felt too internationally to act like that; I had more friends in the German army than in that of my native country. I was perfectly aware—and not only intellectually, but emotionally aware—that there was exactly the same appeal to enthusiasm and action in the patriotic feelings of the people on either side of the frontier. It did not even require imagination to tell me this. On Saturday, I had witnessed the scenes of mobilisation in France, the earnest, silent, devoted answer of a whole nation to the call of duty. On Sunday, as I accompanied Hermann Müller to the station at Brussels, I had been just as impressed by the sight of a couple of hundred young Germans taking leave of their parents

and friends, to obey the order of mobilisation. When their train left amidst the singing of patriotic hymns and pathetic shouts of "auf wieder-sehn," I was equally struck with the attitude of a generation that was gladly going to sacrifice itself for a cause in the sacredness of which it believed. On the two following days, I was told by friends who had just returned from Germany, that the outbreak of war, there also, had created an atmosphere of genuine enthusiasm and devotion to the duty of what was considered to be national defence. I have learned since, of course, that very soon afterwards, as soon indeed as it seemed that the victorious German armies were going to sweep into Paris, these original feelings became adulterated by brutal "Siegesfreude" and the lust of conquest which the newly discovered knowledge of Germany's military superiority called forth. But this does not alter the fact that on the 4th of August, whatever the rulers and the military caste may have thought, the mass of the German people honestly believed that they were about to fight for their homes and the integrity of their fatherland, and that therefore they were inspired by a staunch spirit of patriotic sacrifice. That they were misled does not affect the altruistic nature of such a popular passion, since it leads to the sacrifice of individual safety to a common cause. This is probably why its appeal to the sympathy of those who witness it

is so strong that to withstand it takes more independence of character or capacity for cool analytical thinking than most people can muster. In fact, most neutrals who lived in Germany in the earlier stages of the war, even amongst those whose sympathies would otherwise have been with the Entente powers, went through the same experience. I have met quite a few Americans in 1918, then rabidly pro-war, who had lived in Germany and remained there through the earlier stages of the war, and who confessed that they too had not escaped the contagion of popular enthusiasm in August, 1914, and even later.

My immunity from it derived from my knowledge that this enthusiasm existed on both sides. Moreover, I had been for years engaged in a peace propaganda which was inspired by the desire to avert such a conflict as had then broken out. And I well knew, as did all those who conducted this propaganda, that the creation of such an atmosphere of popular enthusiasm was an essential condition to any warfare under the prevailing régime of parliamentarianism, control of public opinion by the press, and universal military service. No government would have dared to risk war without having first created this popular feeling, and facts have proved that every government had at its disposal, directly or indirectly, the means to do it.

Yet there was one element of the popular feel-

ing in Belgium at the time that made me yield to its natural appeal to sympathy. It was very different from the intoxication of a people with the hope of victory. It was a much more exalted feeling than that due to the consciousness that Belgium had been forced into war by the unprovoked attack of an enemy twenty times her superior, with the aggravating circumstance that she sacrificed herself for the sake of loyalty to a pledge.

*There* was a decisive impulse at last! I felt such an overmastering movement of repulsion against cowardly brutality, of active sympathy with the victim of an unprovoked aggression, of instinctive desire to share the sacrifice of those who willingly gave up everything for honour's sake, of admiration for the little plucky one against the big brute, that I could not doubt a minute that *this* call came from what was good and true in me, and had to be obeyed. There was to be no reasoning here beyond ascertaining the fact that Belgium was not using her refusal to break her pledge of neutrality as a mask for the pursuit of selfish interests or some other unavowed, unclean purpose. And this fact was soon ascertained. I could trust my own judgment as to Belgium's innocence, for if anybody could have been biassed against the Belgian Government, whose internal and external policy I had always execrated, it was I. But no doubt

was possible here: *all* Belgium's immediate interests were for yielding to Germany's demand to let her pass; honour alone was against it. The sacrifice was too evident and too grievous to allow any suspicion as to the purity of the motives that inspired it.

To a systematically suspicious mind, only one alternative remained possible: Belgium's refusal to yield to the German ultimatum might have been a platonic demonstration which, whether followed or not by a feint of military resistance, would have safeguarded her against the suspicion on the French and British side of her having been Germany's accomplice, and at the same time have allowed her to expect reparation from, and reconciliation with, a victorious Germany, whose plans of conquest would not have been seriously hindered.

To entertain such a suspicion would have been, as events showed very soon afterwards, unjust towards the men who then formed the government. I dare say that on both sides—the ruling conservative, Roman Catholic party on the one hand, and the progressive, labour and radical opposition on the other—there was an equal amount of pleasant surprise in finding that the other party too had acted, not on partisan motives, but as men individually hurt in their honour by an insult to the State of which they were citizens.

German diplomacy had started on its great adventure under evil auspices indeed. By showing right at the outset the brutality of its purpose and the ruthlessness of the means which it intended to use, it managed to weld into a common attitude of desperate resistance two powers which otherwise it might perhaps have tried successfully to keep neutral or even favourably disposed: the Labour Party and the Roman Catholics.

These two antagonistic powers — for in Belgium the Roman Catholic Church is essentially a political power, identified with the Conservative Party—together represent practically the whole nation. The Labour Party—probably the strongest of its kind in pre-war Europe—had always been outspokenly socialistic, with particularly accentuated internationalist and antimilitarist sympathies. The headquarters of the Internationale were in Brussels, so that here the Germans might have found a natural channel to influence labour and socialism the world over. Belgian socialism was traditionally opposed to any manifestation of attachment to the State, to such an extent that before the war the waiving of her national flag or the strains of the national anthem would have been taken as an insult in labour circles. Although the Labour Party advocated general popular armament, it did so more to oppose the prevailing system of army organ-

isation, which was calculated to give the ruling classes a willing instrument to support their domination, than to help create a strong weapon for national defence. To the latter it paid indeed little practical attention. Lastly, the relations between the Belgian Labor Party and the German Social-Democrats were particularly intimate and cordial, and German socialism was always looked up to for guidance, example and help.

It is true that in the Walloon part of the country, which includes the main industrial districts and socialist strongholds, there was always a great admiration and love for France and French democratic ideals. But this might have been neutralised by the equally strong and natural sympathy of the Flemish for their Teutonic cousins, and by the general execration of Russian Tzarism, which was just then being used in Germany as a means to induce the Social-Democrats to support the "holy-war of Teutonic culture against Russian barbarism." A German diplomat with no more than the ordinary amount of cunning might thus well have been tempted to use the power of Belgian socialism to create an atmosphere of neutrality and moral isolation around the enemy.

The same is true of the Roman Catholic Party in Belgium, to a greater extent even, for here it was more than neutrality, it was sympathy and

moral support that Germany might have expected if she had laid her plans more shrewdly. Here she might have relied on the instinctive solidarity of purpose between the supporters of the principle of centralised and autocratic authority in ecclesiastical and moral matters, as represented by the Roman Church, and the censor-bearers of political despotism, as represented by the Kaiser. The subsequent attitude of many dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church in neutral countries and in Italy, Ireland and South America, has been significant enough in this respect. Kaiserism and Popery were the allied crusaders of feudalism, temporal and spiritual. That the rulers of Germany were aware of this natural sympathy is evidenced by an utterance of Kaiser Wilhelm himself in the first year of the war, which was duly reported to the Belgian Government at the time. The Kaiser, whilst on a tour along the Western front and through occupied Belgium, paid a visit to the famous Abbey of Benedictine monks at Maredsous. He had a talk with the Prior, who happens to be a celebrated scholar, one of the most authorised representatives of Catholicism in Belgium. The Kaiser unbosomed himself to him by complaining bitterly about the lack of understanding and sympathy the Belgian Catholics had shown him. "And yet," he said, "do we not all stand for the maintenance of the same



principle, authority? Is it not a pity that we have been divided?"

Apart from these general reasons, there are other motives which might have made it worth while for Germany to try to win the support of the Belgian Catholics. They looked up to the "Centrum," the political party of the Roman Catholics in Germany, much in the same way as the Belgian Socialists did to German Social-Democracy. Their stronghold was in the Flemish part of the country, where there was a distinct racial sympathy for Germany. France was intensely unpopular with them, for political and social reasons as the Mother of Revolutions, and for ecclesiastical motives as the pioneer of the emancipation of the State from clerical power. Especially since the separation of State and Church and the expulsion of the congregations that had rebelled against the law on popular education, there was hardly a sermon preached in a Belgian church which did not refer to France as an instrument of the devil and a hotbed of corruption and infidelity. Germany, on the contrary, now that the last echoes of the Bismarckian "Kulturkampf" had long ago died out, was praised for the particular friendliness which the imperial government had of late shown towards the Church. Last, but not least, the Hapsburg dynasty, which had so much contributed to strengthen the political position of the Church in

the eighteenth century, when Belgium was under Austrian rule, was held in veneration by all Belgian Catholics. When Austria declared war on Serbia, the newspapers controlled by the Catholic government took the Austrian side outspokenly, and played a conspicuous part in the vituperation of the Serbs.

Yet, after the German ultimatum, there was only one Belgian Catholic—old Count Woeste, the leader of the reactionary wing of his party—who declared himself in favour of a policy of platonic protest, without active resistance to Germany's plans. He found nobody to follow him. On the contrary, all through the German occupation, the Belgian Catholics, headed by Cardinal Mercier, were a very energetic element of patriotic resistance, with the exception of a very small part of the Flemish low clergy who sympathised with the so-called activist movement fostered by the German Government.

Thus in a few hours Germany transformed a peace-loving nation, which had always been favourably disposed towards her, over whom she had established an intellectual and commercial influence almost amounting to a protectorate, and which was anything but prone to militant nationalism, into her bitterest foe. There is something almost pathetic in the curse on Germany's destiny that made her, right at the outset, disclose her true purpose by an act that outraged the con-

science of the whole world, nay, that caused the world to realise that it had a conscience—the act that made a Chinese child say: Belgium is not a road, it is a country. It was the more pathetic, in that it turned a nation of pacifists and anti-militarists into a nation of soldiers.

It was not the accident of my Belgian birth, it was the fate that turned Belgium into the symbol of violated right that made me a soldier. I think I should have felt and acted exactly the same way if I had not been a Belgian. True, if I had lived thousands of miles away, the strength of my impulse would have been less, for exactly the same reason that makes one more impressed by a quarrel next door than by a catastrophe that kills ten thousand people on a faraway continent; but the nature of the impulse would have been the same. If you walk along the street and see a big hooligan attack a weak, unsuspecting woman, you do not stop to consider who the woman is. You go for the bully. That was exactly the impulse that moved me, and as I was right in the middle of the fray, it was strong enough to draw me in.

It mattered precious little what my view of Belgian patriotism was. Who cares who the woman is? I have admitted already that I had several reasons to find fault with her. As a Socialist, and as a supporter of Flemish aspirations in favour of cultural autonomy, there were

many reasons why my patriotism was not orthodox. I wished fervently to see all frontiers disappear and all civilised nations become part of one vast union; but in the meantime, I felt that the same principles of common honesty that are a condition to organised life amongst individuals should equally apply to relations between states. Indeed, I cannot conceive of any higher form of international organisation—call it if you will, the United States of the World—that could develop except from a gradual recognition and universal application of those same principles of mutual fairness and loyalty. I certainly found many faults in Belgian institutions, laws, and characteristics; but after all, it was up to the Belgian people to change these things if they wanted to. Their Constitution, which provides for popular self-government, gives them the means to do it. Nothing, however, can be done unless that self-government be made safe against the aggression of a foreign power. There was such a bitter social struggle in Belgium for the improvement of labour conditions and labour legislation, which were very much behind those of the neighbouring great countries, that Belgian Socialists often quoted Jules Guesde's saying that the wealthy and the poor of a nation have but one thing in common: the battlefield. But even though this should be so, is it not an essential interest of both combatants that this battlefield should be kept

free from foreign interference? Is it not of equal importance to them that the rules of the tournament, as set by the community of political institutions, of speech and traditions, should not be upset?

As to the grievances of the Flemings, they were serious enough, but since the Belgian Constitution puts the Flemish and French languages on the same footing, and since the Flemings form a majority of the nation, there is not one of these grievances—lack of a Flemish University, insufficient administrative autonomy, exclusive use of French in the army, etc.—which could not be redressed by using the liberties for propaganda and facilities for amending the law, which the Constitution of Belgium provides. More than that, the protection of these liberties and facilities against Prussianism appeared as an essential condition to the realisation of Flemish aspirations. Whether the Flemings liked an army commanded in French or not, whether they preferred something different from a common army or a common administration altogether, mattered little, since the German invasion compelled them to use whatever army they had to defend the democratic institutions that were essential to any increase of their cultural autonomy.

But what is the use of going into such details of argument? Regardless of any particular desires or ideals as to what our state ought to be

and ought to do, there, in spite of all its imperfections and shortcomings, it stood and had to be maintained if any improvement were to be possible. It was being attacked by another, larger state, for having refused to break a pledge to which this other state itself had been a party. It had either to admit that any state stronger than itself, might, regardless of right and treaties, force its will upon it, or else to fight. It chose to fight, and the whole people backed it.

To defend Belgium was, therefore, to fight for something very much more important than that this particular country should continue to exist. It meant fighting for the right of nations to choose their own form of government, and to have that form of government respected by all other states in accordance with the principles of common fairness and loyalty to promises, which, by universal consent, govern the relations of men.

The stronger my reluctance, as an internationalist and a socialist, to follow the lead of those who believed in "my country, right or wrong," or to consider the problem of the war from the viewpoint of any particular nation, the clearer was my realisation that the wrong done to Belgium was but a symbol of the menace of German aggression to what is an essential condition to socialism, as I conceived it, and to internationalism itself. Not until I shouldered a rifle did I know what it meant to be a citizen of the world.

The first three or four months of the war were a period of purely animal life, void of all thinking. This period covers the first phase of operations, that of open warfare which preceded the stabilisation of the Belgian front on the Yser. I was first a private in the infantry; later a corporal; and then a sergeant. The actual hardships were terrible, much more so than anything that happened to any army since, and could probably only be compared to those of the Serbian army in its great retreat. Yet these months were one of the happiest times of my life.

This was mostly due to purely physiological reasons: the joy of open-air life, of continuous exercise and the exhilaration of physical adventure. Add to this the happiness of comradeship, the novelty and freedom of our unconventional life, and the smiling, fatalistic thoughtlessness created by constant danger under continuously varying circumstances. I felt like a boy of fifteen throughout. Even if I had had time to bother about anything but the elementary needs of physical life, I do not think I should have done so. I felt free from all cares. Only one thing mattered: to remain alive if possible; and that could not be helped by worrying.

Those of my comrades who belonged to the so-called educated classes all felt more or less the same way, with the exception, of course, of those who were physically unable to stand the hard-

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ships of our life. I must, however, have felt the happiness of it with more than usual intensity. Thanks to the strength of my health, my training as a sportsman, and my naturally sanguine and gay disposition, the physical sufferings appeared to me but as the magnified vicissitudes of a picnic. The filth at one time became very disagreeable, but it helped one to appreciate all the more the value of a pail of cold water and some of the main elementary joys of life connected with its use. I have always strongly resented the necessity of doing intellectual work, a real torture to me at times. My native instincts and my bodily constitution are those of a rancher, of a hunter—or of a soldier. I felt unspeakable delight at having at last struck a way of living that suited these fundamental instincts.

Some of the happy carelessness of those days may also have been due to the certainty that, by obeying a good impulse—and the happiness attained thereby proved that it *was* good—I relieved myself of the burden of self-questioning. I was moreover no more than a particle of a huge machine over which I had no control. I did not even know enough of its working to be able to form any ideas about it. I certainly knew less about war operations than the man in the street ten thousand miles away from the front; for I hardly ever caught sight of a newspaper, and all that I knew about the operations I was engaged



in was what concerned my own company or battalion. I never dreamt when we were harassing the German lines of communication early in September, that we were helping to win the battle of the Marne. I did not know that I had been in the retreat of the Belgian army from Antwerp, until it was all over. All I had to do was to obey orders, and get as many hours of sleep as I could to rest my tired body. With a clear conscience and the constant immanence of death, physical wants and bodily pain became in themselves a joy. So great is the delight of a soul at peace with itself, since it has found in submission to duty a single all-dominating purpose.

It did not require a great effort of imagination to realise that my chances of seeing it through unhurt were but slight. I remember having discussed this subject more than once with some of my comrades, detachedly and almost jokingly, but with the precise judgment of surgeons debating a "case." My conclusion was that if I might choose between the certainty of losing a limb and the uncertainty of my fate as a soldier, the odds were such that the safest choice would have been the loss of a limb. This careless state of mind may seem strange in view of the fact that I had left a wife and child at home. I feel bound to confess that, much though I loved them, I bothered very little about them in those days. My wife had considered my enlistment as a mat-

ter of course and been very brave, and my attitude of mind towards her was exactly the same as towards a soldier-comrade: she too had to take chances. She told me much later that she had never been really worried about me either; the certitude that, whatever happened, I would not get killed, never left her. I can only explain this mutual freedom from fear by the fact that we were both exalted with fighting determination to such a pitch as to trust blindly in Fate. Such can be the power of spirit over flesh.

It was about this time that Karl Liebknecht came to Brussels and saw my wife. He had been my most intimate friend during my stay in Germany, when he was already concentrating his efforts on antimilitarist propaganda. His endeavor to bring the Social-Democratic Party to an attitude of active opposition against the ultramilitarist tendencies of imperial Germany had then met with little success. He hoped, however, that the younger generation would be more receptive, and therefore took a leading part in the socialist young people's movement, which about that time began to assume a certain importance in Germany. My efforts were directed towards the same aim. Together, we created the International Socialist Young People's Federation, of which Liebknecht was president and I secretary, and which we mainly considered as a means to promote an antimilitarist spirit in Germany

and Austria. I collaborated with him in writing the pamphlet "Militarismus und Antimilitarismus," for which he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in a fortress.

Our friendship was, however, based on something more than intellectual collaboration. I never agreed with all his ideas, thinking him somewhat crankish and too impulsive at times. I am sure, nevertheless, that he would never have become the fanatic he was, in the last bolshevik stage of his career, had it not been for the overstraining of his nerves, caused by years of persecution, that made him forget everything save his fury at the cowardice and hypocrisy of the German Majority Socialists. Yet it was that very downrightness and idealistic impulsiveness which strongly differentiated him from the Germans of his generation, that made me like him so. He, likewise, showed himself very partial to me. He was a great admirer of Belgian socialism, and he often said that he expected the Belgians to give European socialism an intellectual lead, since they combined the thoroughness of mind of the Teutonic races with the energy of the Anglo-Saxons and the fiery enthusiasm of the Latins.

I had not heard from him since he spent a couple of days with me in Brussels, a few weeks before the war. All I knew about his attitude towards the war was that he was one of the

fourteen Social-Democratic members of the Reichstag who had abstained from voting the war credits on August 4th. In the second week of September, he visited occupied Belgium to learn the truth about the mutual accusations of atrocities. It is this journey that convinced him of the falsehood of the German stories about franc-tireurs, and of the truth of the atrocities perpetrated by the German soldiery. His determination openly to oppose war dates from that visit.

On his arrival in Brussels, he went to see my wife. Two Belgian Socialist deputies, who had accompanied him from Liège, were with him. They treated him very cordially, since he had given unmistakable evidence of his friendly feelings, not only by his statements in broken French, but by his successful intervention in favour of ill-treated Belgian civilians threatened with execution by the German troops at Andenne and near Tirlemont. These good people were somewhat surprised to find that my wife received Liebknecht rather coolly, and for a couple of hours talked to him in German in a tone of violent reproach, which Liebknecht received with evident signs of emotion. Tears filled his eyes when she told him what she thought of the attitude of the German Social-Democrats. He apologised for not having voted against the war credits himself by saying that he was at the time

too badly informed, but he had since realised that Germany had been the aggressor and that Belgium's resistance was justified. When she told him that I, the antimilitarist, had become a soldier in order to fight against militarism, he said that I was right, and that in my place he would have done the same. This statement was reported to me a few weeks later, and did more to strengthen me in my attitude than anybody else's opinion would have done.

I was to need strengthening sooner than I expected. After the battle of the Yser, the monotonous routine of trench warfare succeeded the enthusiasm of the first three months of open fighting. I was sent to the rear as an instructor and spent three months drilling recruits in camps in Normandy. Everything was in a terrible state of disorganisation there, and the hardships which had been found so easy to bear in the brunt of fighting now became almost intolerable, all the more so as they were avoidable, and largely due to the incapacity for organisation and improvisation of the military bureaucrats in the rear, who had found themselves suddenly transplanted from their old Belgian barracks into a foreign environment. The loss of many brave comrades fallen in battle, which I had hardly time to think about when it happened, began to weigh heavily on my mind, now that I could collect my thoughts. Altogether, it was a time of depres-

sion, a natural reaction following the exaltation of the beginning. So I seized the first opportunity that presented itself to return to the front, as a Belgian liaison officer attached to a British division in Flanders. Such high expectations were aroused at that time by the idea of the "spring offensive"—expectations that were to be renewed with equal want of success for four years—that I little suspected that I would have to remain for fourteen months in the same sector, with five different divisions relieving each other in succession. It was the famous "Plug Street Wood" area, a much quieter part of the front than the Ypres salient proper or most places further south, but "lively" enough to make such a long stay without the interruption of a period in rest billets somewhat of a strain on the nerves. Above all, it was a dreary country. There was, along the line of trenches, the desolation of the muddy fields of Flanders; while our billets were situated amid the gloom and sordidness of the dirty industrial villages, with their endless rows of poor brick-houses. It well deserved to be the scene of Captain Bairnsfather's first inspiration as a caricaturist of the grim humour of the front. The whole spirit of the "Plug Street Wood" area lives in his deservedly popular cartoons "Staying at a Farm," "This Muddy War," "Directing the Way at the Front," and many others.

This period of trench warfare, that, including

my subsequent return to the front of the Belgian army as a trench mortar officer covers the whole of 1915, 1916 and part of 1917, was a time of painful doubting, searching introspective analysis, and uninterrupted struggle against moral depression.

At first the war had appeared to me as a mere fight of the Belgians and the French, helped by England, for the repulse of invasion. Our "war aim" was to protect our homes, the integrity of our territory, the existence of our institutions, our nationality itself, against aggression from a power that had set out to annihilate them by a sudden, masterly stroke. This aim would have been attained by beating the invader back behind his own frontier.

The stabilisation of the Western front, however, soon made it appear that a purely strategical decision of that sort was not to be expected. At the same time it became evident that there were other issues involved, incomparably more important and intricate than the mere clearing of the invaded territory from the armies of occupation.

There was Russian Czardom, the presence of which amongst the Entente powers did not fit in with the theory, based on an impulsive generalisation of the case of France and Belgium, that we were fighting in defence of advanced democratic institutions against the aggression of a

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backward despotic régime. Then England, her colonies and her dominions soon began to throw such a weight into the balance, that the war developed primarily into a contest of power between the British and the German empires. The Japanese undertaking against Kiau-Tschau, the expeditions against the German colonies all over the world, the fighting on the Egyptian border, in Mesopotamia and on the Gallipoli Peninsula clearly showed that something more was at stake than the possession of Belgium and the North of France. The British fleet, which in the beginning had been but a means to protect the lines of communication between the old country, her expeditionary force and her Empire, and to keep the German navy from the scene of action, now became an offensive weapon in an economic war against blockaded Germany, a war which was much more terrible and promised ultimately to be much more decisive than any operations on land. Germany retaliated by starting on her submarine campaign. The whole world began to take sides. Countries entered the lists whose interests were not, like England's, directly affected by the territorial extension of Germany along the shores of the North Sea and the Channel. Italy threw in her lot with the Entente. Turkey and Bulgaria sided with the Central Powers. In practically every neutral country, America included, the propaganda by the bel-



ligerent powers and the economic problems caused by the blockade of Germany and the supply of the belligerents with foodstuffs and war implements created antagonistic currents of feeling and clashes of interests.

But it also appeared that the war was to be something more than a military and naval contest of power. Cleavages of opinion became apparent within the borders of both warring groups. The seeming unanimity of the German people at the beginning of the war was broken by the protests of Liebknecht and of a growing minority of Independent Socialists, clamouring that they had been misled in August, 1914. In Russia, some of the radical elements supported the war, the others were intensely against it, whilst the government's energetic action in the suppression of vodka and the Czar's promise of independence to Poland suggested fundamental changes in the attitude of the ruling powers. In South Africa there appeared to be a strong rebellion, not entirely due to German propaganda, against military participation. It seemed as though an increasing fraction of the Irish were going to avail themselves of Britain's difficulties to foster a revolution with or without Germany's support. It became known that the Slav nationalities of the Hapsburg monarchy, which seemed at first to have been caught by the general war-fever, now took an independent and almost

threatening attitude. The Pope, followed by most of the representatives of the Catholic Church in the neutral states, committed himself to a policy of peace by negotiation that public opinion in the Entente countries took for an attempt to favour Germany's ambitions and save his beloved Austria from disruption. It became evident that a considerable part of the population of Alsace-Lorraine, far from being bullied into submission by the increased ruthlessness of the Prussian methods of administration, manifested a desire to return to France. In occupied Belgium, the Germans encouraged the movement of a minority of Flemings that aimed at separation from the Belgian Kingdom with the assistance and under the protectorate of the German Empire. Last but not least, there appeared to be amongst the working classes of the Entente countries, which had at first seemed to give wholehearted support to a war of national defence, an active and growing minority of dissenters, who found strong support amongst the socialists of neutral countries.

The first statements of these latter's views came to my notice in November, 1914, when I again had leisure to read. They were in magazines, newspapers and pamphlets by British, French, Dutch and Swiss socialists of the pacifist type. My first impression was painful resentment of what I thought to be a wrongful lack

of appreciation of the motives of those socialists who, like myself, had accepted the duty of taking part in the defence of their country. But I soon realised that the matter deserved very serious attention. There was nothing in what they said, however unacceptable and unjust it seemed to be at first sight, which did not call forth an echo in my innermost sentiments.

Some of those who were saying that this war was nothing but a conflict between two groups of imperialist powers for world dominion, and that therefore it should be internationally opposed by labour, I knew to be men and women of high intellectual standing and unexceptional moral character. Up to August, 1914, I had been in complete sympathy with them. What, then, had come between us? Why, in a crisis like this, when our lives and the fate of our nations were at stake, should we stand in diametrically opposed camps?

The principles on which their reasoning rested had always been mine, and the sentiments to which they appealed were the very sentiments that had made me act as I had acted. They spoke of the ideal of international brotherhood, of the criminal fratricide of workers, whose interests were common, in the cause of an egoistic class of oppressors. Was it possible that I should have been misled to the extent of lending a willing hand in such a cause? The very weight

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of the charge made a thorough self-examination necessary.

There was one of their statements, and apparently a fundamental one, the truth of which I could not deny. This war had been brought about by the antagonism of interests of imperialist powers. It was not a freak of history. It was the outcome, the unavoidable outcome, of the capitalist system of production. The Marxian theory explained how this system led to the production of a larger quantity of goods than could be bought by the income of those who made them. Hence a growing tendency in all industrial countries to secure new outlets abroad, under the protection of their flag, for this surplus of production. At the same time, it became more and more necessary to draw raw materials and food supplies from foreign countries. If the latter were on a lower level of civilisation, this was a further incentive to gain political control over their territories. All this meant colonialism, imperialism and competitive armaments on land and sea. These tendencies were common to all great powers and, as the surface of the world is limited, naturally brought them into conflict with each other. The chief antagonism since the beginning of this century was between the British Empire and Germany. Between these two, a tension had arisen that could only lead to war. England's development as an industrial power

had been earlier than Germany's, and she had secured most of the world before Germany's hunger awoke. But the last score of years had witnessed an enormous expansion of German industry and trade, whilst England's position in the world's trade had remained by comparison stationary. Satiated British imperialism could neither give its possessions away, nor tolerate the formation of another world-wide power, so that German imperialism could not get what it wanted for its continued development without taking it from somebody else. This deadlock was bound to end with a clash of arms.

Similarly, the internationalist argued that the attitude of the other powers, like Russia, France and Italy, was dictated by the desire of their capitalist class for imperialist expansion. The national interests of the capitalists, they said, need not, however, concern the working classes. Labour's interest was the same the world over, and could only be promoted by international understanding and brotherhood. Therefore, labour should not take any part in this war, for which the capitalist classes alone were responsible and for which they should be held up to universal opprobrium. The only way to end this war, and even to end war altogether, was for the Socialists to oppose it in every country. They should hinder their governments in its prosecution, and, by taking the political and industrial power from

the then ruling classes, establish a proletarian régime which would make and maintain peace as the natural expression of the international solidarity of labour. The Socialists who for some different reason were helping their governments to prosecute the war were either traitors to the cause of socialism or victims of nationalist intoxication. They were putting the interests of the capitalist class of their country above the interests and ideals of the international proletariat.

This was, in its most consistent and clearest form, the theme of those socialists who called themselves internationalists. It found expression in the international conferences called at Zimmerwald and Kienthal, in Switzerland, by majorities of the socialist parties of Italy and Switzerland, the bolshevik fraction of Russian socialism, and minorities from France, England, Germany, Austria and a few other countries.

There was another section of European socialism, comprising the majority of the German, Austrian and Hungarian Social-Democrats, more or less openly supported by some fractions of the Socialist Parties in the Balkan States, Scandinavia (especially in Denmark), Italy and the United States, who took a view that differed both from that of the "Majority Socialists" of the Entente countries and that of the "internationalists." Like the latter, they emphasised the imperialist character of the war, but they put

the chief responsibility on the powers arrayed *against* the Central Empires, and advocated the support of the latter governments by the labour movements in their countries. I hardly need point out that, although I carefully listened to what they had to say in defence of the German and Austrian case, I was from the beginning so unfavourably disposed towards them that my judgment and sentiment were never disturbed.

I found it much more troublesome, however, to dispose of the claims of the internationalists. I confess that, for two years at least, they made my mind a prey to doubt. This doubt was a torture, for it threatened to undermine the soundness of a cause for which at any moment I might have to give my life. I hasten to add that the frequent mental conflicts thus caused invariably resulted in my conclusion that I had been right in August, 1914. Even while they lasted, they never affected my will to do my duty as a soldier.

## IV

### THE SPELL OF DOGMATISM

“Alles erklärt sich wohl,” so sagt mir ein Schüler, “aus jenen Theorien, die uns weislich der Meister gelehrt.”  
Habt Ihr erst einmal das Kreuz von Holze tüchtig gezimmert,  
Passt ein lebendiger Leib freilich zur Strafe daran.

GOETHE.

IN spite of the pain caused me by the doubts arising from the criticisms of the internationalists, they were so beneficial to me that I am grateful now for every hour of merciless self-analysis they cost me. For this analysis has given me much more than the certitude that I had not been mistaken in my view of what was at stake in August, 1914. To it I owe the lasting benefit of having put my whole method of thinking, my attitude towards society and the world, through a fiery test that, as I now realise, has emancipated me from many things that were not a part of my true self. It has torn from my eyes the veil of doctrinarianism. It is less to the ordeal of shell and shot than to this hammering test of my conscience that I owe the remaking of my mind.

The premises of the internationalists' thesis—the imperialist origin of this war—was correct,



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but the deduction they drew from this—the necessity of opposition to the war in every country—was entirely wrong. Its original fault was due, not to any technical mistake in the reasoning, but to the method itself on which that reasoning was based. I found this false method to be at the bottom of many more wrong deductions than this particular one. The same logical defect, for instance, lies at the root of the theory of bolshevism. It consists in the assumption, which I think illegitimate, that an actual attitude towards an historical fact can be derived by way of logical deduction from abstract predicates gained, not by the study of these facts themselves, but by induction from other previous facts.

I consider the first part of the internationalists' thesis as unassailable; that the war was the outcome of antagonisms of interest resulting from the need of imperialist expansion of countries at an advanced stage of capitalist development. Many non-socialists undoubtedly agree with it, accepting, for instance, its particular application to the economic motives of German-British antagonisms. The economic conditions in which this war originated are those of capitalism in its satiated, imperialist stage, where its faculty of quantitative production has outgrown the possible needs of the home market. In so far it is right to say that this war was a capitalist

war, or an imperialist war. It is also right to say that socialism, that is an hypothetical social system based on public ownership and democratic control of the main means of production, would make any such war impossible.

But what is capitalism? What is imperialism? What is socialism? Do these words refer to actual historic facts, to things as they are or were in a certain place at a certain time? By no means. Socialism, as a system of social organisation, is a hypothesis. And there never has been a moment in history when one could say: now capitalism *is*. Nothing ever *is*, except an immense diversity of fluctuating facts. Everything is on its way to become something else. Our mind cannot even grasp an isolated physical phenomenon until it has already ceased to be what it was when we recorded it. What we call capitalism, or feudalism, or primitive communism, are certain imaginary combinations of characteristics which a large number of economic facts over a long historical period have in common. These abstractions do not, however, coincide, at any actual time, with the whole of the economic facts even in a single spot. In every civilised country we now have methods of production of the capitalist system alongside with survivals of pre-capitalist stages, as well as methods which are already incompatible with the idea of capitalism to the extent that they may be called feel-

ers towards socialism. But even if we confine ourselves to certain phenomena in which we recognize the characteristics of capitalism, who would say: this is *actual* capitalism? Do not we all see that these phenomena are no more today what they were yesterday, and know that they will not be tomorrow what they are today? Moreover, is not the very assumption that there are economic facts as distinct from say psychological or political facts, evidence that, for the sake of clear thinking, we draw in our minds imaginary boundaries between different classes of phenomena? Yet we know that in the real social world facts are so mingled that we can speak of considering one and the same occurrence from an economic, a psychological, a political, or any other viewpoint.

The mere fact that abstract notions like those of capitalism and socialism are static, whilst the actual realities of life are dynamic, proves that coincidence between the two is a mythical assumption. For if we stick to the abstraction of say imperialism as the system of politics that corresponds to the satiated stage of capitalism, and without more ado apply this to facts of contemporary history, we shall have to put Woodrow Wilson and Kaiser Wilhelm the Second under the same label as representatives of capitalist imperialism.

To such an absurd conclusion we come if,

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whilst dealing with facts, we indiscriminately use, as elements of the same logical process, facts and categories. Capitalism, imperialism, socialism are categories. War itself—War with a big W, War in general—is a category. They are imaginary things, equipped with attributes which result from generalisation and analytical induction. We use these categories as instruments necessary to scientific thinking. But we should keep in mind the difference between the instrument of thinking and its object. Categories and facts are on as different a plane as a chemical formula and the matter it stands for.

This is not an indictment of abstract thinking, but a warning against its misuse. It is thanks to our faculties of imagination and abstraction that we are able to think scientifically. Without the use of such categories as capitalism, imperialism and socialism we should be helpless to find a clue to whatever knowledge that matters in the infinite variety and complexity of events. To show the limits beyond which they should not be used is to pay a compliment to their usefulness.

I should not think it worth while to expatiate on such commonplace notions if I had not been made to realise the tremendous harm done in these days, when public education and the newspapers give a cheap veneer of knowledge, by the indiscriminate propagation of catchwords which the masses too easily take for granted as facts.

I say this with purposed reference to the socialist movement.

To people with as pronounced a faculty for abstract thinking as the Germans and the Jews, this sort of mischief with catchwords has been a curse. The Russian socialists, who have sat at the feet of both German and Jewish masters, have learned from them the lesson of Bolshevism, which is nothing but an attempt to apply to certain actual conditions abstract doctrines which have been derived from conditions entirely different. By this I do not mean to explain the Bolshevik movement by the accident of a flaw in a logical process. To do this would be to make their mistake my own, and confuse the abstract with the concrete. Bolshevism as a movement has its origin in certain actual conditions, to which I will refer later, but as a theory, it is a brilliant illustration of the absurdity of making actual deductions from categories.

Marx is often held responsible for this propensity not only of the Bolsheviks, but of all the doctrinal socialists. It is true that the Bolsheviks and most of the "Internationalist" Socialists claim to be the representatives of "pure" Marxism. But on the other hand we find many, if not most of those socialists who before the war played the main part in the spreading of Marxian principles and their application to politics, in the ranks of those whom their realistic view of

the war caused to be branded by the Bolsheviks as "vulgar patriots" or "opportunists." I will mention Karl Kautsky foremost, who has achieved more than anybody else as a student and exponent of Marxianism. As one of the leaders of the Independent Social-Democrats in Germany, he has emphatically repudiated the Bolshevik version of internationalism and accepted the theory of German and Austrian responsibility for the war. In England the leader of the Marxian school of socialism, H. M. Hyndman, has fully deserved the epithet of an ultra-patriotic socialist. The father of Russian Marxianism, George Plekhanoff, was one of the most ardent supporters of the war. In France, the old pioneer of Marxianism, Jules Guesde, who in 1914 became a member of the first Ministry of National Defence, represented an almost extreme patriotic view, whilst his younger followers like Compère-Morel and those around him were also decidedly pro-war. In Marxian literature, Belgium used to be represented by Louis de Brouckère and myself. We both enlisted the same day. In neighbouring Holland, the father of Dutch Marxianism, Frank van der Goes, from the beginning expressed his agreement with the win-the-war socialists of the Entente countries. Even in the United States, the attitude of most of the foreign-born members of the Socialist Party should not make one forget that

there are many Marxians amongst those American socialists who left the party because of its failure to support the war.

All these men, by the way, belong to a type very different from the cosmopolitan set predominantly of East European origin, who form the background of international bolshevism. It strikes me that none of the names I have just mentioned is Jewish, and that half of them denote an origin from among the so-called upper strata of European society. I point this out merely as a contribution to a psychological explanation, and not by any means as an attack on the Jewish race. It is quite wrong to assume that Bolshevik doctrinarianism is practically confined to the Jews, or that there are no Jews among the win-the-war socialists of the Entente countries and their sympathisers elsewhere. Although the Jews, as a cosmopolitan element *par excellence*, form a particularly favourable recruiting ground for bolshevism and other "internationalist" doctrines, it would be a dangerous disregard of the importance of the causes in which these doctrines originate to ascribe them to mere racial circumstances. There is many a Bronstein, alias Trotzki, amongst the bolshevik leaders in all countries, but there are also such aristocratic names as Wladimir Ulianoff, Lenine and Henriette Roland Holst-van der Schalk, besides a few as genuinely Prussian as Franz Meh-

ring, as typically Scandinavian as Sverre Krogh or Hinke Bergegren, as authentically Anglo-Saxon as Lansbury or Debs, or as truly Latin as Bourderon, Loriot, Brizon and Raffin-Dugens. On the other hand, there is no lack of Jews in Russia and elsewhere, amongst those socialists, Marxian and otherwise, who supported the war for Democracy or even took a combatant part in it. Yet when all this is said, it remains a fact that, as a rule, the attitude of mind of the Marxian Socialists has been largely influenced by the extent to which they were associated with the national civilisation of their countries. Hence the different frame of mind of those whose forefathers have been for many generations linked with this life and those who have never been allowed to strike their roots anywhere.

Marxianism is not a system, but a method. The results obtained by this method depend on who uses it, how he uses it, and what he uses it for. So much is certain, that Marx himself has used it in a very different way from those who now lay claim to the monopoly of his inspiration. If he were still alive he probably would not be a Marxian.

It is true that the strength of Marx, like that of Spinoza and most Jewish thinkers, lay in his power of abstract thinking. The claim of his faithful famulus Engels that he made socialism



scientific is not to be taken in the sense that he equipped the socialist movement with a perfect system of final knowledge about the laws of social development. It merely means that he had been the first to base his view of socialism not on utopian desires, but on a study, by scientific methods, of the laws of economic and historic development, the unavoidable outcome of which he thought socialism would be. He was compelled to use inductive analysis in order to discover the laws of capitalist economy. About the middle of the nineteenth century, long before capitalism had reached the acme of its development, he had to show the historic necessity of socialism and to formulate its programme. The concrete knowledge of contemporary facts arrived at by Marx, important though it was, is anything but final. Who would go back to works written half a century ago for an accurate description of a system of production which has made more progress since these works were written than it had before? Surely there are pages in Marx's writings where his prophetic genius still strikes one with amazement; but prophecy, though it may be evidence of the extraordinary power of a scientific method, is not in itself a method. Even such Marxian theories as that of value, which depend on the knowledge of actual facts, no longer appear to us, in the light of what has since happened, as a final explanation;

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they are now merely an important and brilliant chapter in the history of economic doctrine. They were, as all similar theories before and after, no more than a hypothesis of which the relative soundness is to be measured by its relation to the facts known at the time when it was conceived.

A much more lasting value attached to the method of investigation used by Marx. His interpretation of the struggle of economic class interests as the dynamic power of social progress has revolutionised methods of historical investigation. His explanation of conflicting class interests by the system of production prevailing at a given period, and of this system of production as the result of a given state of development of the means of production has proved a particularly valuable clue to historical research. The value of this clue is so far from being exhausted, that there are whole fields of investigation—e. g., the history of science, the progress of strategy, and the development of nationality—where the first attempts at utilisation of the Marxian method have not been undertaken until quite recently. On the other hand, investigations like those set on foot of late years by Rudolf Hilferding on financial capitalism, by Karl Kautsky on the theory of population, and by Rosa Luxemburg on the economic background of imperialism have shown that even on Marx's own field of re-

search, his method could still yield interesting results.

But is it as needful of amendment as, for instance, was that of Darwin in the realm of natural science. A method of investigation is but an instrument, and when the instrument ceases to be perfectible, it is no longer of any use. The Marxian method no more leads to absolute truth in matters where truth is but a relative and subjective quantity than any other process for the interpretation of history ever has done or could do. But, in my opinion, it is still far from the stage where it will cease to be the most useful of all instruments at our disposal. Whether the label be Marxian or not, I do not think that the European labour movement will readily give up such an intellectual weapon. The appeal of the labour movement to social idealism is all the stronger since it makes even the every-day struggle for petty improvements appear as part and parcel of a great historic movement for the reform of society. It finds supreme self-reliance in the knowledge that its aims, its progress and its ultimate victory are as necessary a consequence of the contemporary phase of capitalism as were, in earlier phases, the downfall of feudalism, the decay of the guild system, the establishment of political democracy, and the abolition of slavery.

If it be true then that Marxianism is but a

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method of investigation, there is no more reason to make Marx responsible for bolshevikism than there would be to blame the discoverer of oil for the crime of an incendiary. His fate is that of all scientific innovators and system-builders. The greater their genius, the worse the harm done by the class of people whom Schiller had in mind when he said with reference to Kant: "When kings build, there's a job for the carters."\*

Marx, like Kant, and so many others, is a victim of the law of the least effort. It is so very much easier to recite the formula in which he concentrated what was most liable to amendment in the results of his research, than to grasp what makes the lasting value of his work—the living spirit of his method. Characteristically enough, this method is never explicitly formulated in his own works, so that it has to be distilled from the study of his writings and of his political activity. Whoever undertakes this study will be struck by the numerous instances of Marx's almost prophetic sneering at those who read the letter but are blind to the spirit. This spirit was not that of dogmatism. It was not syllogistic, but dialectic. His analysis of the tendencies of capitalist development will be found magnificently alive with the dynamic spirit that checks its own findings by contradiction and

\* Wenn die Könige bau'n, haben die Kärner zu tun (Kant und seine Ausleger).

sees perpetually moving facts where others but stare at milestones. It is as pregnant with the sense of dialectic motion and evolution as is the involved and progressing reality of the capitalist society he surveyed.

Most of this I had already realised before the war. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two I had myself sinned against the spirit by idolising the letter. I had just outgrown then the utopian and purely sentimental stage of socialism, and was carried away by the enthusiasm of my discovery of Marxianism as a system that promised to equip my desires with the victorious infallibility of science. My dogmaticism, however, did not long withstand the dissolvent influence of a more intimate contact with real life as time went by. Especially during the three years that preceded the war, which were almost entirely devoted to practical social work in Belgium, I had come to a view of things in which a much more modest part was played by abstract theories. My connection with the trade union movement had had a particularly strong influence in that direction. But not until the war, when I found myself at grasps with the disastrous consequences of a doctrinarianism which I had myself contributed to spread, did I fully realise the necessity of a thorough self-examination. The first definite conclusion I then came to was that, just as philosophy begins with the theory of

knowledge, so the value of any theory of social progress depends on the recognition of the limitation of its field.

We Marxian Socialists had succumbed to the fascination of a theory that not only gave us an unsurpassed instrument for the discovery of some of the main causes of historic progress, but appealed at the same time to reason by its fierce analytic power and to constructive imagination by its bold foreknowledge of a future conceived as the resultant of unalterable laws. So far so good. But our propaganda had carried a superficial knowledge of the formulæ that synthesised these theories into the minds of people who ignored the method through which they had been arrived at, and who therefore lacked both the knowledge of the natural limits of this method and the capacity to use it as a means perpetually to revise its own results. So one day we found ourselves confronted by people who used the very formulæ which they had learned from us in a way totally different from the one we had intended. Arguing helped no longer: When we talked facts they answered by dogmas.

It was of course an easy excuse to say that such is the penalty of all vulgarisation of knowledge. I for one have not tried to shield myself in this fashion, but say: *mea culpa*.

I had to lay the axe at the root of the evil, and start from the principle that theoretical views

about the general causes of contemporary wars should not cause one to replace facts by categories. These views should merely help to a better understanding of the facts and to the judgment of each case on its own merits. Thus the solution of the particular problem of labour's attitude towards this war became comparatively simple.

My starting point was the same as that of the "internationalist" socialists. This war was due to general causes, internationally inherent to the present social system, and therefore the attitude of socialists should be inspired by a universal view of the case.

I further agreed with the internationalist that in view of the menace to civilisation of a war originating in the opposition of interests between minorities of the involved nations, it was the duty of labour to try to prevent its outbreak by all means. This had indeed been done, as long as there was the slightest chance of averting the conflict, in what proved to be the only possible way: by bringing pressure to bear in each country upon its government to keep it from aggression and to make it help the other governments in finding an amicable solution. These attempts had been unsuccessful, because the power behind them was insufficient, at least in some of the countries involved. The war had become a fact in spite of our efforts.

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I ceased to be in agreement with the internationalists however when they said that this fact need not alter our policy and that we should continue, irrespective of the strategical or territorial situation, to oppose the conduct of the war in every country.

This policy was based on the twofold assumption that the strategical and territorial situation did not affect the interests of labour, and that all the governments engaged in the war were equally responsible and animated by the same detestable motives.

I considered that both these assumptions were false.

First of all, I thought that labour, having been unable to prevent hostilities, had nevertheless, to say the least of it, the same interest as the other classes of a given country in opposing the invasion of its territory and the replacement of its self-chosen government by the rule of a foreign domination. This, by the way, was the logical conclusion from one of the most fundamental principles of both the first and the second Internationale: the right of each nation to dispose of itself. All the international Socialist and Labour Congresses had considered it a matter of course that, should a country be attacked by a foreign power threatening to take away this right of self-disposal, the working classes should participate in the duty of national defence.



So the decisive question came down to this: was it possible, in this war, to draw a distinction between the aggressors and the victims of aggression?

The "internationalists" denied this possibility, on the ground that imperialism was universally responsible. They said that the only aggressor was international capitalism and the only victim the international proletariat; so that there was but one alternative to the war—socialism—and but one policy—international social revolution.

Thus were categories substituted for facts. For the conception of this war was as an aggression of capitalism against labour was an abstraction based on categories, not only different from, but opposed to the facts of the case.

These facts were military and naval operations as a test of power between states. Far from grouping international capitalism against the international proletariat, the war involved at least a temporary rupture of the universal solidarity of interests of these two groups. They were no doubt extremely deplorable facts, but they were very tangible all the same, much more tangible than any armchair-formula to the millions who fought in the firing line, lived in invaded territory, or suffered any of the thousand-fold consequences by which the reality of this titanic struggle was brought home to the inhabitants of Europe.

Yet there were but two alternatives: either to shut one's eyes to the facts and withdraw into the realm of these formulæ, or to accept their reality, face their consequences, and draw their logical conclusions.

For those who, like myself, took the latter course, these conclusions were clear enough. They were:

First, that, although imperialist capitalism had created the conditions which made a world's war possible, the main, immediate and actual responsibility for this particular war rested on Germany and Austria-Hungary, who had shown their aggressive designs by the latter's attack on Serbia and the former's on Belgium and France.

Second, that the autocratic form of government and the aggressive militarism of the Central Empires, together with the lack of disposition on the part of their peoples effectively to oppose this system, made the victory of these powers incompatible with the progress of any movement which requires political freedom, democracy and peace for its normal development.

The dilemma—either to accept this conclusion of the facts, or not to consider the facts at all—was obvious, as was shown by those socialists who sided with the Central Powers, like the majority of Social-Democrats of Germany and Austria themselves. Although they refused to accept the internationalists' postulate of opposition to war

in every country, they had to take refuge, to cloak the responsibility of their governments, in the "internationalist" formula of the universal responsibility of capitalism, and persistently refused to consider the case on its actual merits. This is why, even after the armistice, the majority Social-Democrats continued to refuse any discussion of the responsibility for the war. Hypocrisy, said La Rochefoucauld, is the homage vice pays to virtue. The attitude of the German Social-Democrats shows that similarly intellectual duplicity is the homage falsehood pays to truth.

Once I had thus emancipated my mind from the spell of dogmaticism, and decided to consider facts irrespective of previous general conclusions, I had gained control of the weapon that was ultimately to solve my doubts and give my conscience peace. I was armed for the struggle, but the struggle itself had yet to begin.

## V

### GERMAN PATRIOTISM

. . . the land of the folk-songs,  
Where the gifts hang on the tree,  
Where the girls give ale in the morning  
And the tears come easily.

G. K. CHESTERTON, *The Ballad of the White Horse*, III.

THE first problem that arose was the revision of my attitude towards Germany in general and German social-democracy in particular.

In spite of my hatred of German militarism and my disgust with German submissiveness, in spite also of the fact that I was constantly in danger of being blown to bits by a German shell or "punctured" by a German bullet, I was still a German patriot. I am one to this day. By this I mean that irrespective of Germany's attitude in this war, the word Germany still suggests to me other things than "*Feldgrau*." It is associated with many lovable recollections of the country and of the people; with gratitude for the enrichment that my spiritual life owes to German art, literature and science; with appreciation for the part Germany has played for centuries in the progress of European civilisation; with the ar-

dent desire to see the German nation, freed from despotism, recover in a league of self-governing peoples a position corresponding to its best qualities. I have always felt that this war for the self-government of nations would not be worth winning unless it gave the German people the full rights to dispose, not only of its territory, but of its own fate, and thus enable it to fulfil a better destiny than that of being the tool of a dynasty. It is in this sense I have never ceased to be a German patriot. While fighting against the German army, I was fighting for the German nation. Or, to put it more accurately, in fighting against the German nation of today I was fighting for the German nation of tomorrow.

But what a tragic contrast between the splendour of this aim, and the barbarity of the fratricidal means by which it was to be reached!

I never felt this more distinctly than one night in June, 1915, after an evening spent in a village a few miles in the rear of the front with a friend who at that time was in a neighbouring sector and, like myself, had been a student at German universities. I can vouch for it that he was as determined a fighter of the "boche," whose bullet marks he bore on his body, as I was myself. But the very intensity and concentration of war-like purpose that had been required for several months made both of us aspire to some relaxation from the thought of war. This we found for a

few hours in the house of the good French people who gave us hospitality that evening, with a sufficient amount of comfort almost to create the illusion of being at home. As we two sat alone after supper with a pipe and a glass of wine, we began to talk of Germany—a Germany very different from the grim reality that faced us only half a dozen miles away—the Germany we had both known and learned to love in her universities, her libraries, her opera-houses and concert-halls. We sang some of the old folk-songs we had sung as students. Songs of true love and the yearning of sentimental souls; songs full of the fragrance of woods and moorland, breathing love of nature and *Wanderlust*; songs of the generation of 1813 and the *Burschenschaften*, fired with the spirit of sacrifice for the freedom of a great nation in the making; songs of eternal friendship and loyalty, songs inspired by the naïve legends of a fantastic "*Märchenwelt*"; songs sparkling with the gentle mirth of people who, through the glimmering of a glassful of Rhine wine, see a rosy world full of good things, good friends and good feelings. And we asked ourselves: can the soul of a people belie itself like that? Do these songs not speak of Germany as it really was and will be again? Is not the revelling in crude materialism and utter immorality, which followed its over-rapid rise to industrial power; the bestiality of its militarism; the brutal perfidy of its present attempt

to bully the world into submission—is not all this a bad dream, or an illusion of our hatred?

Thus we debated, forgetting for one evening the pain of reality, as we walked back under the starlit sky of the mild summer night, full of the fragrance of hay and birch leaves, whilst the loud croaking of the frogs in the near brooks and ditches muffled the faint rattling of machine-guns and the low grumbling of cannon in the distance. Every now and then ahead of us a Verey light went up from the sky-line, leaving a sinuous trail of sparks, and looking for a moment like a star among the stars, then bursting gorgeously into a cascade of greenish light that seemed to fill the horizon with fireworks. The crescendo of our feelings had made us silently happy. No words were needed to tell each other that we were both dreaming of the happiness of a reconciliated mankind, and that those lights in the sky were but fireworks at the festival of our imagination. When finally one of us took up the motif of the last phrase of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, it echoed in both our minds as the fittest expression of our exaltation. As we hummed the heroic passage of "*freudig, wie ein Held zum siegen,*" we did not think of the real khaki or grey-clad figures, at that very moment crouching, three miles ahead, in fear of death, under the outbursts of light thrown by those fireworks over the shell-torn landscape of sandbags and wire entangle-

ments. Our "Held" was some Prometheus, fighting humanity's eternal fight against hostile nature, conquering darkness with light. . . . As we came to the climax of the Hymn to Joy, it seemed indeed as though our minds embraced a world reconciled in the universal joy of freedom and as though everything around us were but a passage in the great symphony that was to culminate in "Seid umschlungen, Millionen! diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!"

A shell screamed and threw up a few sods and some mud from a ditch near by. My friend's satanic laughter greeted this awakening from our dream. A few minutes later, as we neared the cross-roads where our ways parted, a bayonet glittered in the night and a hoarse voice shouted: "Halt! who goes there?" I answered "Friends." But we were no longer thinking of the world-friendship hymned by Schiller and Beethoven. Our friends were all on *this* side of No Man's Land. Guns and rifles were the instruments with which we were then playing our part in the world's symphony.

Yet could one cease to remember, and, above all, could one cease to hope? I tried hard to do so, for I feared—though this never happened—that at some decisive moment the strength of my will to fight, which means to kill as many of the enemy as you can, might be impaired. But I tried in vain. And, as I now look back upon



those years at the front, I am glad that it was so, and that I have been able to kill Germans without ceasing to love Germany. A few hours of painful arguing with myself, a few cruel awakenings from the world of dreams, and even the risk of being misunderstood by narrow-minded comrades who might have guessed right about my innermost feelings (though I never talked more about these things than could be helped)—this was not too heavy a price to pay for the blessing of not having surrendered my soul to blind hatred. After all, what I loved Germany for made me hate and fight the Germans all the better.

There are two bad mistakes that can be made in judging a nation. The first is to consider it as a homogeneous entity, irrespective of any differences between classes or individuals. The second mistake, which is worse still, is to treat national characteristics as always remaining the same. Both errors unfortunately are extremely common. They are both encouraged by the widespread belief in a theory that explains nationality by racial characteristics. This offers the undoubted advantage of presenting a very simple explanation of very complicated things, besides opening a wide field to the amusing play of conjecture, of personal sympathies and animosities. Nevertheless, this explanation is as false as it is easy.

Let the dogmatists of race help us to explain the civilisation of African tribes or the migrations of Red Indians. Very well. Let them experiment in America with immigrants from Eastern Europe. Very well again. But for the sake of human science let them refrain from any attempts to explain national psychology in Western Europe by the colour of people's hair or the dimensions of their skull; for there they must either confine themselves to the domain of commonplace or else jump with both feet into such hopeless conjecture that no benefit can result from it except amusement at the colossal dimensions of their fanatic blunders. I wish somebody would explain Belgian or French nationality to me with the help of the race theory, and tell me something more than that the present racial characteristics are composed of those of all the races, nations, and tribes—Celts, Gauls, Romans, Goths, Franks, Saxons, Swabians, Frisians, Basques, Moors, Arabs, Huns, Britons, Normans, Spaniards, Jews, and whatever else—that have kept wandering about, fighting or mixing uninterruptedly for a score of centuries. Are not the racial characteristics of the Germans very much the same as those of the Anglo-Saxons who descend from the same stock? And yet, what an abyss between German and Anglo-Saxon psychology! There is probably much more in common, on the other hand, between the habits and

traditions of Herr Fritz Schulze, greengrocer of Berlin on the Spree (who is a flaxen-haired dolichocephalic descendant of the Saxon forest-dwellers of Brandenburg) and Monsieur Marius Latignasse, of Marseilles on the Rhone (a dark-haired brachycephalic keeper, whose pedigree goes back to Phœnician and Hellenic colonisation) than there is between either of the two aforesaid gentlemen and Mr. John Smith, clerk of London on the Thames. Yet Mr. John Smith's fair hair, pink complexion and long skull make him resemble Herr Schulze like a brother; and the Smiths may have lived in the hut next to Schulze's in that same old Brandenburg forest two thousand years ago, or, for that matter, in the same cavern another score of centuries earlier still. I am of as true a Flemish stock as any (there was a de Man amongst the Flemish free-men who fell in the Battle of Cassel in 1328), yet within the last seven generations, in direct descent alone, there has been Spanish, French and Dutch blood mixed with what may have remained of the original fluid, of which nobody knows or cares whether it was Frankish, Saxon, Frisian, Celtic, or of any other tribe of pale-faced men that walked upright on a pair of legs.

In the cockpit of races which Western Europe has been for twenty centuries at the very least, it is as ridiculous to base a nation's claim to a soul of its own on race as it is for an aristocrat to think

that his blood is of a different colour from that of the *plebs*, forgetting how easy it is to calculate that within the last thousand years, which more or less correspond to the age of feudal aristocracy, his blood may have been made, at the reasonable rate of three generations per century, out of that of 2,147,483,646 men and women. The corresponding number of sixty generations, which is less than is required to modify the physical characteristics of a race, consists of nineteen figures. One must, of course, make a very liberal allowance for double entries on account of inbreeding; but even so, there remains quite a *plebs* by itself to say grandpa and grandma to.

The war itself has been the most conclusive of all refutations of the race theory. We have seen the world clearly divided into two camps according to their views as to the fundamental principles of government: for and against democracy, the self-disposal of nationalities, the recognition of international right above the convenience of single states. Here, then, if ever, there was a test of national psychology, both for the belligerents and the neutral peoples. Yet who could discern the influence of race in this cleavage of the world? Teutons of the British Empire and America, as well as the "low German" Flemings and Boers, were arrayed against the Teutons of Germany. The Scandinavians of Norway favoured the Entente; a large part of

the Scandinavians of Sweden, Denmark and Finland sided with the Central Powers. The majority of the Saxons and Frisians of Holland sympathised enthusiastically with the cause of France; one-third of the names of the Prussian Junkers and one-half of those of the Austrian officers were Slav; and Slav Bulgaria made war on Slav Serbia and Slav Russia. Half of Latin Spain sympathised with Germany. Arabs attacked the Turks in Hedjaz and Syria; but other Arabs helped the Turks in Gallipoli. Scottish Celts died for the Empire at Ypres; whilst Irish Celts died for Sinn Fein in Dublin; Jews fought under every standard, and I mention but a small part of the evidence.

In order not to complicate the problem I will not refer here to the cosmopolitan origin of the population of the United States of America, for there we have to consider nationality as well as race—two notions which should be kept strictly apart. Yet I might point out that if even the ties that bound immigrated Americans to European nationalities have not been able to disrupt the moral unity of the American people, how much more powerless must racial characteristics have been.

The theory of those who argue that the Germans do not belong to civilised mankind, or are constitutionally vicious, faithless and cruel, because of their racial characteristics, is as childish

as Mr. Houston Stewart Chamberlain's claim that the same racial characteristics are those of a *Herrenvolk* destined by God—or rather, *Gott*, that old crony of William Hohenzollern—to subjugate the world and lead it to greater triumphs. Both theories may be consigned to the Museum for Ethnography, along with the stone or bone utensils of our forefathers, the forest-dwellers.

National characteristics, namely those that result from a historic community of language, institutions and culture, synthesised by a common political organisation, are quite a different matter. Here there is room for sane argument. But it must be observed that once the element of race, which for all practical historical purposes is a constant value, is eliminated, all the other components that constitute a nation's psychology are at the same time heterogeneous in space and variable in time.

They are heterogeneous, even at a given time, because the same causes, when related to the spirit of a nation's institutions and traditions, may, and very often do, result in different, and, even, in opposed characteristics, according to the features of groups, or individual psychology, with which they combine. Any attempt at scientific collective psychology is necessarily based on the hypothesis that the psyche of a man living in society results from a combination of influences that vary according to the different kinds of rela-

tions existing between this man and other men. To discern the component parts of this combination, individual men must be studied as belonging simultaneously to different circles or groups, such as originate in the state, provincial or local community, social class, profession, religious creed, political affiliation, family traditions, kind of public education received and of habitual reading, and so forth. Every one of these groups, which are either a community of interests or of views, or else of both, represents an element in the total formula of what a man's psychology owes to his associations with other men. The relative strength of these influences is variable. Class or professional allegiance, for instance, may have a more powerful psychological effect upon nationality itself. Thus, kindred interests and mode of life may give a working man in Budapest a greater psychological resemblance to another working man in Buenos Ayres than to a Hungarian university professor or landowner in his own city. The same may be true, and very often is true, of this Hungarian university professor and his Anglo-Saxon colleague in Seattle. Their psychological similarity may be much more manifest, even in their physiognomy and gestures (say, in the way they put their spectacles on their noses), than is any resemblance between our Budapest professor and his fellow-citizen of a different occupation. There is something more than

a joke in this. The obvious likeness in habits and psychological peculiarities between professional categories all the world over with such pronounced characteristics as those of teachers, cab drivers, costermongers, innkeepers and many others, are but an illustration of the fact that modern conditions of life have created between men stronger ties of common interests and views than those of national allegiance.

The jocular character of these examples must not obscure the much more serious aspect of the universality of aspirations which the spread of industrialism has created by approximately standardising the conditions that determine the psychology of the working classes throughout the world. And who would deny that there is more similarity in the outlook on life of, say, a French imperialist steel-magnate and a German imperialist steel-magnate, than there is between either of the two and the average peasant or working man of his own country? Independently, however, of the relative value of its component elements, the formula of group psychology resembles that of a chemical combination in the way a change in one or several of its elements may totally modify the actual result. So the characteristics of nationality may manifest themselves very differently in various social groups.

Let us choose an example in Germany. The clumsy thoroughness of German thinking is uni-



versally accepted as a feature of the nation. Now let us see how it can work differently as an element in the formula of class or group psychology. The Junker class do not hold intellectual functions in very high esteem, because they hardly need them professionally beyond the moderate amount that is required to judge the race or the age of horses or to discern whether some soldier's peccadillo entails eight days "C. B." or one day "in the black hole." Nevertheless, they have certain political interests to defend, which requires action in the press, and in parliamentary and administrative bodies. There, then, the native heaviness of this intellectual mechanism will reveal itself as ruthless dogmatism in the defence of material interests.

Now let us take a different social group, like the extreme radical element of the proletariat, as represented by the Spartacus movement. Its leaders were intellectuals like Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, inspired by an idealistic view of the historic task of their movement, and by disgust with the narrow-minded materialism of the party in power. Combined with the characteristics of this group, the same thoroughness in thinking leads to a form of abstract idealism which, whatever else its faults may be, is an impulse of the highest moral order, and forms a striking contrast to the results of the intellectual characteristics of the Junkers.

A similar contrast arises from the comparison of Junker mentality with the lofty but impractical idealism which, in the case of the old generation of long-haired, spectacled and absent-minded professors, living with their feet in slippers and their thoughts in the clouds, resulted from the combination of this same Teutonic thoroughness with professional pursuits entirely different from those of the Junkers. The best example of their state of mind, which is still more common than is generally believed, is a story related, if I remember rightly, by a Dutch journalist. I think it is good enough to make the digression pardonable.

An international prize is offered for the best monograph on The Camel. A German, an Englishman and a Frenchman, all three University professors, decide to compete. The Frenchman goes to Paris, takes an apartment in the *Quartier Latin* for a few weeks and goes for a stroll every afternoon in the *Jardin des Plantes*—the local Zoo. Then he writes a book, full of witty remarks and *bons mots*, about the camel with whom he has thus made friends. The Englishman packs his trunk; goes to the desert; spends a year there; then comes back with a short, matter-of-fact, but excellently worded description of the few things really worth knowing about a camel. The German hires a room close to the *Königliche Bibliothek* in Berlin, fills it with to-

bacco smoke for three years, and then publishes six volumes on "The Camel (*Camelus Bactrianus*) from an anatomic, biologic, zoologic, economic, etc., viewpoint, in its relation to, etc., with special reference to, etc., with several appendices, charts, diagrams, etc." The fifth volume is devoted to the philosophy of the camel as an abstract entity, and the sixth is a complete bibliography of the subject, embracing everything that has been written or printed about camels since the earliest stages of Egyptian civilisation.

It has often been said during the war, to take another example, that Germans have no sense of humour. Now, it can hardly be disputed that the average German lacks the quickness of perception and thought that is a condition to what Anglo-Saxons, for instance, consider as a humorous disposition. The historical explanation lies near at hand. Germany's development as an industrial and commercial nation is so recent that it has hardly had time to influence the popular frame of mind. For centuries, and until a very short time ago, the Germans have been a nation of peasants and artisans. The peasants were still practically serfs a century and a quarter ago, and the artisans lived in a sphere almost as narrow and in an environment as unchanging as those of the peasants themselves. People who lead this sort of life tend to turn the faculties of their imagination towards music, philosophic

meditation, and the mythology of home and nature. Imagination does not then leave the domain of a man's own mind and of the small world that limits his outlook. This is probably one of the causes of the Teutonic thoroughness. It certainly accounts for the slowness of the German mind. Slow working creates slow thinking, and slow thinking cramps the sense of humour.

To develop their sense of humour, the Anglo-Saxons have required the broad expanse of the world they made their own, which they kept widening, and in which they moved about as a nation of manufacturers, seafarers, traders and colonial pioneers. It was a world full of contrasts and surprises, full also of those adventures that stir the faculty of the human mind to reach against adversity by fun. It is no hazard that the heroic period of English literary humour synchronizes with the heroic period of early English industrialism and imperialism, the time of Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare. Nor is it mere coincidence that the west of America, with the intensity and speed of its pioneer life, full of changing and unexpected conditions and impressions, has produced what to my European mind seems to be the most concentrated and typical form of American humour.

Moreover, until a very few years ago—too short a time to create any new characteristics of mind—there was practically no sporting life in

Germany. Thus it lacked an element that seems to become more and more a source of popular humour, as is born out by the growing predominance of sporting expressions and images in current Anglo-Saxon humorous literature. Yet it would be false to conclude that there is no such thing as genuine humour in the Teutonic soul. On the contrary, the same contemplative life in the narrow circles of peasantry and petty craftsmanship—that resulted in slow, deep thinking, turned the imagination towards the sentimental life, and animated their environment with mythic creations—has developed a strong sense for anything humorous that happens within these circles. Therefore, German humour is essentially a humour of peasants and provincials—just as was formerly English and French humour in a corresponding stage of historic development. Germany has never really outgrown that semi-mediæval stage. Such names, however, as Jakob Kortum, Wilhelm Busch, and Fritz Reuter, which stand for different aspects of German humour at its best, suggest a quality of mirth as genuine and typical as the French, English, or American variety. It does not lack depth and shrewdness, although it has neither the quick motion and directness of the Anglo-Saxon wit, nor the penetrating intellectual *finesse* of French *esprit*.

Yet the mistaken assumption that there is

no sense of humour in Germany is quite excusable, for the classes of Germans with whom foreigners were most likely to come in contact are just those that live outside of the provincial circles where German humour has its roots. They are the city dwellers and more particularly the commercial classes, whose conditions of life have comparatively recently separated them from the sources of sound popular humour, without yet creating the new world of images, tastes and intellectual traditions which could inspire up-to-date drollery. About all that the outside world saw of Germany were these classes, whose average mentality was indeed such as to justify the impression that every German was a bullying, bombastic, blunt-witted, tactless and unsportsmanlike person, with no sense of humour beyond his glee in brutality, cruelty or obscenity. There is a sense of humour in German home-life in as far as it resembles that of the peasant or artisan ancestry; but none in German politics, or in German warfare. If you talk to an officer in the Prussian Guard, you will find that the only sort of humour about him is involuntary; but if you have a friendly chat with a Swabian peasant or with an old shoemaker in some Bavarian town-ship, you will many a time discover a turn of mind, both poetic and humorous, that will make you grasp the meaning of old German "Gemütlichkeit."

## VI

### GERMAN MILITARISM

Les opinions qui different de l'esprit dominant, quel qu'il soit scandalisent toujours le vulgaire: l'étude et l'examen peuvent seuls donner cette libéralité du jugement, sans laquelle il est impossible d'acquérir des lumières nouvelles, ou de conserver même celles qu'on a; car on se soumet à de certaines idées reçues, non comme à des vérités, mais comme au pouvoir; et c'est ainsi que la raison humaine s'habitue à la servitude.

MADAME DE STAEL, *de l'Allemagne*.

THE utter impossibility of a theory based on the stability of national characteristics becomes increasingly obvious as soon as we view nationality as an element that varies with time. A very few examples will suffice to show how these characteristics change together with the historic conditions that create them.

The history of my own country offers a particularly striking illustration. Walloons and Flemings present the marked contrast of two nationalities with the opposite mental characteristics of industrial and agricultural life. The bulk of the Walloon population lives in the industrial beehives that crowd around our coal districts; while the Flemings are essentially agricultural. The Walloons will tell you that the Flemings are a heavy, slow and stubborn race,

with a conservative mind, whose ignorance, lack of intellectual independence and inclination to mysticism make them a prey to the most backward forms of clericalism. And in fact, Flanders is a stronghold *par excellence* of the political and social power of Roman Catholicism. It holds the Belgian record of illiteracy and criminality: practically all the conservative votes are cast in what the Walloons call the "black districts" of Flanders; and the Flemish country people who periodically migrate into Walloon territory to do unskilled industrial work are looked upon almost as coolies by Walloon labour. The mentality of Walloon Belgium, on the other hand, compares with that of Flanders like Lancashire with Ireland. It is in the former that all the progressive movements are fostered; three-quarters of the votes cast in the great Walloon centres of the mining, metal, textile and glass industry are for the Labour Party; and it is the only part of the country where agnosticism and protestantism amount to anything.

Neither race nor language has anything to do with this contrast. There is no appreciable difference in the ethnological origin and characteristics of Flemings and Walloons; the Teutonic element prevails with both. True, the Flemings speak the same language as the Dutch, and the Walloons as the French; and there is, in conse-



quence, a Germanic influence in Flanders and a French influence in Walloon Belgium. But this does not at all account for the difference in mentality which I have just set forth. For the Dutch brethren of our Catholic Flemings are predominantly Calvinists; whilst France — which does not, as many foreigners believe, mean *Paris*—is a Catholic country, where the conservative psychology of the peasantry, and of an economically backward provincial petty bourgeoisie, is as prevalent as the numerical preponderance of these social classes in the body of the nation is great. On the other hand, the most reactionary and intellectually backward element of the Belgian population is the French-speaking bourgeoisie of Flanders. When I add that in those few Walloon districts that are purely agricultural, the same conservative spirit prevails as in Flanders, whilst in Flanders itself there is a progressive and non-catholic minority that is practically entirely confined to the working classes of the few industrial towns, it will become obvious that social conditions account almost exclusively for the difference in psychology of the two halves of the Belgian population.

But then these mental characteristics are no more permanent than are those social conditions themselves. This is why until the end of the sixteenth century, the mental attitude of Flemings and Walloons was exactly the reverse of what it

is at present. From the thirteenth century until that time, Flanders was a hotbed of heresy and revolutionism, whilst the Walloon provinces were the "black districts" of political and intellectual servility. In the latter part of the Middle Ages, when all other European countries except the Northern Italian cities were still the thralls of serfdom, feudalism and popery, the Flemish cities were already self-governing democratic communities. Their internal history is that of an uninterrupted series of social struggles, in which an indomitable spirit of independence and political radicalism manifested itself. Their external history is that of continuous and successful fighting in defence of their democratic institutions against those feudal powers which, like the kings and the aristocracy of France, represented the spirit of political conservatism; whilst the repeated ban of the Pope bore testimony to the persistence of their rebellion against the powers of spiritual conservatism. Even the peasantry followed the example of the communes and freed themselves from feudal serfdom five hundred years before the rest of Europe. During all that time, there was no stir of life in the landlord- and priest-ridden Walloon districts, with the exception of a couple of isolated industrial towns like Liège and Dinant. When the great revolutionary struggle of the Netherlands came to its climax in the rebellion against the clerical

and despotic régime of the Spanish kings, whose vicissitudes fill the main part of the sixteenth century, protestant, democratic and revolutionary Flanders found no support in the Walloon provinces. On the contrary, it is largely (thanks to the assistance they lent) to the Spanish that the rebellion was finally drowned in blood. Mass executions, the destruction of cities, the banishment or voluntary emigration of the Protestants and revolutionaries marked the beginning of the long period of decay in the democratic civilisation of a country that was too much in advance of the rest of Europe to be allowed to live. The Flemings then uttered the same reproach against the Walloons, as the Walloons of nowadays formulate against the Flemings, namely, that they were of a slow, conservative, backward, servile mind. And they were just about as right as the Walloons are now.

How could the mental characteristics of a population suffer such a complete inversion within a lapse of time of less than three hundred years? Simply because the social and industrial conditions that determine them have been likewise inverted. Mediæval Flanders was industrial; mediæval Walloonie was agricultural. Flanders was then politically and intellectually in advance of the rest of Europe, because it was in advance economically. As early as the thirteenth century, more than three quarters of the population

of practically every Flemish city lived mainly from cloth-making. This semi-capitalist industry, which worked for the export trade, was as much of an anomaly in the relative narrowness and stagnation of mediæval economy as the political régime of the Flemish communes was in the world of feudalism and autocracy. The Walloon provinces, on the contrary, were still in the stage of agricultural serfdom. From this they sprang into that of great capitalist industry in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the opening of the era of the steam-engine created around their coal fields those huge industrial agglomerations which are among the densest in the world.

Since the end of the sixteenth century, on the other hand, Flanders has seen her industrial prosperity come to an end as the result both of the opening of new trade-routes and of the exhaustion of her population through disastrous social and political struggles. She became an agricultural country once more, with nothing to remind her of the former splendour of her urban economic life but her cathedrals, bell-fries, town- and guild-halls—and the dejection of the people who lived in their shadow and became a prey to unexampled pauperism, which was at the same time solaced and perpetuated by the Catholic Church and her convents.

The history of the German nation itself, al-

though it shows no such complete inversion of national characteristics, abounds in examples of profound modifications within a few generations' time.

I might refer the reader back to my analysis of German sense of humour, which shows that at the time when all great European nations lived under the economic régime of peasantry and small artisanship—namely, until the beginning of modern history—there was not the same difference as at present between the characteristics of the German nation and those of her western neighbours. In the Middle Ages the literary and artistic expression of the popular soul was as uniform in countries like Southern and Western Germany, France, England, the Netherlands, etc., as were the social conditions themselves. Their feudal aristocracy had its common mental characteristics, tastes and fashions, including the sense of humour, as evidenced by the internationality of such institutions as the troubadours, minstrels and jesters. On the other hand, the universal popularity, and the universal origin even, of the main poetic works, the folk-songs and the mystic literature of that time bear witness to the psychological similarity of the common people. The association of Germany with such universal expressions of plebeian humour as the *Historye of Reynard the Foxe*—*Roman du Renard*—*Reinaert de Vos*—*Reineke Fuchs*, or as the Owl-

*glass—Ulespiègle—Tijl Uylespieghel—Eulenspiegel*, is striking evidence that the Teutonic humour was then on a level with that of other countries. The differentiation only began later, when new economic conditions created nationality in its modern sense.

The exceptions to the rule of the universality of mediæval literature only strengthen the argument. They are practically confined to the free bourgeois cities of Northern Italy and Flanders. Their early, hothouse-capitalism created the conditions that made the beginnings of modern national poetry, art and literature possible.

But we need not go back to the Middle Ages nor confine ourselves to the controversial ground of literary taste, to find proofs of the transformation of the German mind. It is fashionable nowadays to explain the hold of military, autocratic and intellectual discipline on the German people, to a racial disposition, inherent to the German spirit. As far as contemporary Germany is concerned, I shall be the last to dispute the postulate that, if ever there was anything to characterise the mentality of a nation, authority-worship is a characteristic of the German people. It applies to the soldier, who stands brutalities from his superiors to which no other white men would submit without immediate retaliation; as well as to the scholar, who thinks that scientific research consists in the compilation of "authorities"; or to

the Social-Democrat, who, like Hugo Haase in the Reichstag on the 4th of August, 1914, put party discipline above his own honour by reading, as the president of his group, its historic declaration in favour of the war-credits, just after he had opposed this very policy, in the party caucus, as a betrayal of all Socialist principles.

The Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne, whose patriotic attitude during the occupation caused him to be deported to Germany, has told me of some of the talks he used to have with the peasants of Kreuzburg, a township where he had been a prisoner for several months. He was allowed to go about in the town, and the Belgian *Herr Professor* had soon become a local institution. He indulged in frequent discussions of the war with the natives, in order to gain some insight into their psychology. His conclusion, he said, was always the same: "My dear *Herr Nachbar*, we cannot understand each other; for your grandfather was a serf, whilst I come from a country where there was no serfdom left after the thirteenth century; in the particular place where my family comes from (the village of Franchimont) it never even existed." No wonder, then, that Freiherr von Bissing, the late German governor of occupied Belgium, called the Belgian mind "a psychological problem."

Some of the friends I had in pre-war Germany may condescend to excuse me for having taken

up arms against them, but if I am to judge by what their papers wrote at the time, I am afraid they will never forgive that in June, 1917, in an address to Russian soldiers, I spoke of the German people as having "souls of slaves." Yet everything I see happening in Germany up to this day, even in the German Republic by the Grace of Foch, convinces me more and more of the truth of what I said then, namely, that in a country so void of democratic traditions and revolutionary spirit as Germany, people do not even understand the meaning of a freedom which they have never tasted. There are quite a few Germans who have realised that too, and said it less politely, though perhaps more adequately. Heine calls a spade a spade when he says:

Es fehlt dem Deutschen zum Hunde nur  
Ein richtiger Schweif zum wedeln.\*

The two founders of German social-democracy, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, must likewise have realised this. At any rate, they used to comment bitterly on the lack of grit in their own following since social-democracy had outgrown its early heroic stage and become a mere cog in the wheel of contemporary capitalist and militarist Germany. There was the same difference between the moral calibre of Bebel's and Liebknecht's generation and that of Scheide-

\* All that a German lacks to be a dog is a tail to wag.



mann's and Noske's as there was between the international policy of social-democracy in 1871, when Bebel and Liebknecht went to prison for protesting against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, and that of 1914-18, when social-democracy declared itself in favour of a plebiscite in these two provinces—after they had been occupied by Foch. 3

I remember Bebel—the “old lion,” as he was then called—at the Congress of the Social-Democratic party in Jena in 1905, using the same word as Heine when he referred to the submissiveness of the German workers. It was just after the ruling classes in several cities, like Hamburg, Dresden and Lübeck, had changed the local suffrage system so as to deprive labour of any chance to become a majority. 4 As in Saxony in 1897, when the three-class system of voting was introduced, there had only been a platonic and ineffective protest. Bebel contrasted this attitude with the Russian revolution, which had then just reached its climax, and with the efforts of the Belgian workers who, in 1893 and 1902, had conquered extensions of the suffrage with the help of the general strike. “We are far behind the *bourgeoisie* of previous centuries,” he said; “for it has continuously struggled for the maintenance of its liberties; whilst we seem to be indifferent when we are robbed of our right to vote and submissively receive lash upon lash across

our backs." When his passionate outburst culminated in the self-accusation, "Hunde sind wir ja doch!" (What hounds we are!) the audience applauded with fury, not knowing the extent to which, ten years later they were to prove the truth of the indictment.

Karl Liebknecht on the other hand often told me how he had inherited his hatred of German servility from his father, Wilhelm, who used to say that he thought the Germans constitutionally unable to undertake anything that was "verboten" by the police, even though it were a revolution. Wilhelm Liebknecht used to say to his son that although from 1878 till 1890 (when the Bismarckian policy practically outlawed the socialists), they had been compelled secretly to evade the law and disobey the police, they did so with a heavy heart and without showing any capacity for conspiring against authority.

Nevertheless, to explain German militarism and despotism by this psychological feature is to mistake the cause for the effect. One need not go very far back in the history of Germany to find that, when other social and political conditions prevailed, the mentality of the German people was different as well. Those who believe in a permanent and constitutional, or even racial inability of the Germans to revolt against tyranny, forget that in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern times, the German cities

like Cologne, Strassburg, Constance, Nuremberg and many others have been the theatre of as revolutionary popular risings as those of any other places abroad where the social conditions were similar. They forget that the great rebellion of the German peasantry in the first half of the sixteenth century, though it did not achieve any more lasting political results than did the similar movements in France or England, could well compare with them in intensity and determination. And above all, they forget that the world owes to the German people the fruits of a gigantic revolutionary struggle that ranks, with the English revolution of the seventeenth century, and the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth, amongst the great achievements that have founded modern democratic civilisation: the Lutheran Reformation. Where was then the slavishness of the German mind.

Some theorists of national hatred, especially amongst the French and the Belgians, have said that the German nation should be wiped out, because it is psychologically unable to conceive, or to adapt itself to, a political régime other than that of centralised autocratic power. This is not even correct as far as contemporary conditions are concerned.

True, there has been in Germany since 1871, and especially within the last twenty years of its rapid industrial progress a marked propensity to

create strongly centralised institutions. Industrial enterprises, banking concerns, labour unions, employers' associations, political parties, official insurance bodies, intellectual groupings, all had this feature in common that they had invested their leading organs with an intensely centralised power. This, by the way, is not a peculiarly German feature. It is inseparable from industrial progress in any country where this progress is rapid and unhampered by survivals of previous stages. Some of the economic institutions in Anglo-Saxon America, for instance, are at least as centralised as similar institutions in Germany. And I am not at all sure that the lack of centralisation in most fields of the economic life in France or Belgium is a token of higher development.

But if we consider the political institutions of Germany, we find that they are much less centralised than the French, or than those of any other great civilised country, with the exception of the United States. The German Empire is a federal body, both in its constitution and in its administration; there is a much greater local autonomy in provincial or municipal matters than in France. The latter country has been fettered by Napoleon with a system of bureaucratic centralisation which the best minds of the country consider as a cause not only of economic backwardness, but also of a state of mind character-

ised by the fear of initiative and responsibility that results from overconfidence in the divinity of the State. Universities, and educational institutions generally, enjoy an incomparably larger autonomy in Germany than in France or Belgium, and have much more pronounced individual features.

If we look back into the past, we shall find that until recently German institutions were anything but centralised, and the spirit of the German nation anything but prone to give up provincial, local or individual rights. Worship of centralisation is as modern there as centralisation itself. Until the creation of the German Empire, 1871—for the mediæval or post-mediæval empire was never anything but a loose federation of princes—there was but one sphere of German life where centralisation reigned: the Prussian army and bureaucracy. And even this dates back no further than to the end of the eighteenth century.

It is not German authority-worship that has created German militarism; it is German militarism that has created German authority-worship. And German militarism is the work of Prussia; and Prussian militarism is the outcome of economic and political conditions that date back to the Thirty Years' War.

Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was not even such a thing as Prussian mili-

tarism in the sense we now attach to this word, namely, a permeation of the institutions and intellectual life of a country with the hierarchic and warlike spirit of a permanent military organisation. Prussia itself was but a small part of the German nation. Its armed power was very limited and, as in all other monarchies and principalities of the period, consisted of a small force of mercenaries officered by the aristocracy. Yet conditions in Prussia were such as to make a real militarisation of the country possible. It was the task that tempted the two Fredericks and which they successfully achieved. The Prussian soil was barren and the population poor; there were practically no cities, and the feudal system had been maintained in all its original harshness by the Junkers, who, however, on their arid estates did not prosper very much more than their peasants. But they owed a warlike disposition to their descent from the colonists who had conquered this originally Slav country; they disposed of plenty of horses and of the human reservoir of a strong, hardy, prolific and hungry race, used to obedience through generations of serfdom, and all the more willing to obey in war as they had little to lose by absenting themselves from their miserable homes.

Yet Prussia would never have become more than a small robber state like many another in Eastern Europe, if the 'Thirty Years' War had

not created circumstances in the more civilised and fertile part of Germany that made her an easy prey to the greed of the Prussian Junkers. This war had left Germany almost as devastated, demoralised and divided as the revolution against Spain had left Belgium a century before. Small and poor though it was, Prussia yet represented, at the end of the eighteenth century, a power more considerable than that of any other political or military body in the mass of petty principalities that then made up Germany.

Prussia's first real chance came in 1813. Germany had been invaded and occupied by Napoleon's armies. For the first time since the Reformation a national spirit again manifested itself. It was the indomitable desire of a people not to live under a foreign despot's rule and pay the price of his wars with its own wealth and blood. When the call to armed resistance came, it found a ready instrument in the Prussian army. True, this instrument had proved worthless at Jena in 1806 against the concentrated and self-confident power of a really national army; but that lesson of ignominious defeat had not been wasted. Prussia's mercenary organisation was replaced by a popular army, based on compulsory general enlistment, whose creation the popular enthusiasm for a war of national liberation had made possible.

This was the beginning of Prussian hegemony

over Germany. It could not, however, be consummated immediately after the war was over, as there was not then the same imperious need for complete political unification as there was in France or England. Germany was still in the agricultural and artisan stage of local and provincial economy. Its slowly rising commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, who needed national unity for their expansion, and its intellectual class, who were still inspired with the patriotic enthusiasm of 1813, were too weak a minority to prevail against the power of inertia of the princes. An attempt undertaken in 1848, under the influence of the Paris revolution, to create a democratic national state, failed miserably.

Another national war was required to enable Prussia to gather the fruits of 1813. Bismarck, the typical representative of the Junker class, prepared it. It was won in 1870-71, after the prelude of the war with Austria, thanks to the efficiency of the Prussian army and administration. The Prussian Junker stood godfather to the Empire. It has remained true to the auspices under which it was born. The Great War was the ultimate outcome of the permeation of the German nation with the spirit of militarism and submissiveness to its lords, which three or four generations had sufficed to instil.

The links of this historic development are so obvious that no mythical explanation by a racial



disposition towards servility is required. German national psychology, as it was since the 'Thirty Years' War, was related to the original causes of the development of Prussian militarism only in so far as the mentality of any population of poor and ignorant peasants—used to traditional submission to their landlords—will always make them suitable raw material of soldiers, irrespective of race or nationality. Exactly the same causes created militarism in Russia, the Hapsburg monarchies, the Bulgarian States, and in Japan, with similar psychological results.

Whilst the characteristics of race remain practically permanent within any historical period, those of nationality may change within one or two generations. There is striking evidence of this in the ease with which the first generation born on American soil of immigrants of any European nationality becomes Americanised, provided that it really lives under American conditions and not in a colony or ghetto which is but an annex of the original fatherland.

Most of the characteristics of contemporary Germany which every free civilised man has such good reasons to abhor have been acquired within the last two generations. To me they appear to be due, not only to the influence of militarism, but altogether to the peculiar circumstances of the over-rapid development of German capitalism. It should be kept in mind that until the last

quarter of the nineteenth century, Germany was a predominantly agricultural country, with a peasantry that had so recently been freed from feudal servility that it had had no time to lose the mental characteristics of this system. By an abrupt transition, in less than a generation, it became a great industrial country of the first order. Now a country may within thirty years develop from a nation of serfs into a nation of capitalists and industrial workmen; but it cannot within such a short space of time evolve industrial civilisation and the higher forms and traditions of political and spiritual life that correspond to it.

England and Germany are about on an equal level of capitalist development. But the English mind has the culture that corresponds to it because it has had three centuries in which to form it; the German mind has not. This is why in the native country of the Hymn of Hate and "*Gott strafe England!*" the upper classes, in spite of their proclaimed contempt for the "nation of shopkeepers" across the North Sea, made such hopelessly funny and funnily hopeless attempts at looking like Englishmen. The more a *parvenu* tries to look smart, the more he looks a *parvenu*. This showed itself not in fashion alone, but in the whole mental and moral attitude of the German upper classes, whose sudden prosperity had gone to their heads. It made the dom-

inant philosophy of the German nation—which until the middle of the nineteenth century had been idealistic and ethical—materialistic and utilitarian. During my stay at German universities, I have often been struck by the contrast between the spirit of what was left of the old idealistic generation, as represented by some of the professors, and that of the students, whose coarsely materialistic outlook on life and unabashed reveling in every form of physical and intellectual brutality gave me a foretaste of what a German invasion would mean. Amongst the older professors and their generation in general, I have known a few men of as fine and gentlemanly a character as may be met anywhere in the world, even though they did not try to knot their ties like Englishmen or to produce “tooth-brush” moustaches like Americans. But I found none amongst the future reserve-officers of Hindenburg’s army who did not illustrate the truth of the saying that the only thing Germany never succeeded in making out of coal-tar is a gentleman. I saw another proof of the fact that over-rapid capitalist development had shaken the moral foundations of the nation, in the appalling extension of perversity and of immorality not merely in the conventional, but in the true ethical sense of the word. It seemed to me to be the consequence of the natural inability of the nerves and the conscience of a people who had been liv-

ing for generations in old-fashioned humdrum social surroundings, to adapt themselves suddenly to the dizzy rhythm of super-modern capitalism, with its unbinding of the traditional ties of a sedentary homelife and its unbridling of new needs, appetites and ambitions.

Now a similar rupture of the moral equilibrium is bound to happen wherever similar social causes prevail. There are many instances of it outside of Germany, in other historical epochs, and even in ours. What, however, made Germany's case worse, not only for herself, but for the rest of the world, is that these causes were not counterbalanced by the self-adjusting influence of adaptable political institutions and the self-educating effect of political freedom and democracy. The spirit of Germany's government was hardly more than the transposition of a military hierarchy and discipline into the plane of political institutions. The tragedy of the sudden growth of German capitalism out of semi-feudal conditions was that German capitalism had adapted semi-feudal institutions to its purpose. This purpose was double: to keep the lower classes down, and to conquer the world (as was so nicely expressed by the German military terminology which used to refer to the "interior enemy" and the "exterior enemy"). But the instrument was single: militarism.

I have never ceased to be convinced that the

war which had resulted from this system could only end by its destruction. And thereon I based my hope that Germany, freed from a system that had turned what was once a true and kindly people into an object of deserved execration by the whole world, might once again become a nation of poets and thinkers, worthy to lay claim on the inspiration of Luther, Kant, Goethe and Beethoven.

So let us hate without moderation, where moderation would be weakness, but with discrimination; hate the German system with all the capacity of our souls for passion; hate it even outside of Germany, wherever the spirit of militarism, submissiveness to despotism, class-egoism and brutal materialism is to be found—and we shall often find it nearer to ourselves than we imagine. But to hate the eternal soul of a nation, struggling like all others from darkness to light, from crime to virtue, is to fall into the very error that has proved so fatal to Germany herself.

I had never imagined that the ruling classes of Germany would act any better than they did when the beast of German militarism was eventually let loose. But, like most socialists abroad, I had erred in my favourable judgment of German social-democracy. The revision of this judgment in the light of facts was one of my main preoccupations during the first stage of the war, and it put my whole conception of socialism

to a test that upset my belief in many idols which I now found false.

I was known in the Belgian movement not only as a great admirer, but even as a promoter of the methods of German social-democracy. Two years before the war, I had been almost expelled from the Belgian Labour Party for my criticism of its opportunist short-sightedness and lack of a clear doctrinal conception, a criticism largely inspired by my admiration of the clear-cut rigidity of German social-democratic policy and its permeation with orthodox Marxianism. The Belgian Committee for Workers' Education, which I had spent three years in setting on foot, had been modelled on the example of the German *Arbeiterbildungsausschuss*. As an advisory member of the executive of the Belgian Federation of Trade Unions, I had successfully promoted a system of national centralisation, organisation by industries, and federative relations between the trade unions and the Labour Party, copied from the German model. I had collected a considerable amount of money for an institution that allowed intelligent young Belgian workmen to spend a few months in Germany, to study German industrial and trade union methods on the spot. I had organised and conducted three extensive tours of Belgian trade union and Labour Party officials to Berlin and other German cities, with the avowed purpose of convert-

ing them to the superiority of the German plan of the labour movement. Many of these things I do not regret in the least. I am still as convinced as I was then of the superiority, in any highly developed capitalist country, of centralised industrial labour unions over the old system of local craft unionism. I still believe that Germany, in the field of the labour movement like in all others, was right in giving as much attention as she did to education, and that all we can reproach her with in this connection is that she used this education for a wrong aim. And I do not think that any of the Belgian labour unions or similar institutions which have adopted the methods of organisation which my "pro-German" propaganda had contributed to popularise have ever had any reason to regret it.

A Belgian general under whose orders I have served, and who knew of my pre-war activities, one day teasingly asked me whether I was not sorry for having organised tours of Belgian trade-unionists to study German methods. "Not in the least, sir," I answered; "my only regret is that I could not organize similar tours for our generals." The general changed the subject. He had particularly good reasons to know that many things might have taken another turn in 1914 if the bulk of our officers had then been up to the Berlin standard in strategy and science of organisation.

Yet I am all the more ready to confess that I have been cruelly disappointed in my reliance on what German labour would be able to achieve, thanks to its excellent methods of organisation and thorough theoretical training.

It did not take me long to realise that what was wrong with German social-democracy was due to deeper causes than the shortcomings of its leaders. The bankruptcy of a tradesman can be explained by his individual incapacity to carry on his business; but it is as foolish to explain the failure of German labour to oppose the aggressive imperialist policy of their government, by the stupidity, cowardice or treason of their leaders, as it is to consider the bolshevik movement in Russia as the consequence of **Lenine** and **Trotsky** being bribed by German gold. Surely it is hard to imagine anything worse than the lack of insight and character shown by the leaders of German social-democracy on the 4th of August and thereafter; but their appalling mediocrity and dastardliness were but a reflex of the mentality of the masses they represented.

From my knowledge, which is fairly intimate, of conditions and people in the German labour movement, and my passionate study, through the reading of their papers and literature, of their attitude during the war, I have never had the slightest doubt that the entire mass of the German working classes, with the extremely few ex-



ceptions of those that did not follow the majority social-democrats, are responsible for the attitude of their leaders on and after the 4th of August, 1914. If there ever was a case where the leaders—and poor leaders they were anyway—were led by the masses, this was one. The war was not the Kaiser's; it was the German people's war. Until they got sobered by irremediable defeat, they were all united by a common purpose.

When the rulers of Germany started the war, they indeed succeeded in making the nation believe that it was a war of national defence. But the sheepishness with which the social-democratic leaders, on the 4th of August, 1914, swallowed the most transparent pretexts for war used by the government, showed that they were glad enough to avail themselves of these excuses for paying no attention to the violation of Belgium in their zeal to hypnotise the masses with the fear of the Cossacks. Yet these same social-democrats, who had previously made the faithlessness of the Hohenzollerns a popular byword, had plenty of reasons to mistrust their government.

As soon as the masses themselves saw that the war promised to end with crushing victory, they became intoxicated with the desire, which had been that of the rulers from the beginning, to use it as a means to establish a military hegemony by Germany over the world. Never during the war has the policy of the majority social-demo-

crats, who undoubtedly represented the practical unanimity of German labour, pursued any other aim than to help Kaiserism to achieve this purpose. All their theoretical assertions about the capitalist origin of the war, all their jeremiads about the impossibility to develop democratic institutions in Germany as long as its frontiers were threatened by a world intent on its destruction, were but *camouflage*. They did not hide the fact that whenever Germany's strategic position was favourable, the Social-Democrats kept quietly in the background and joined in the pæans of victory; whilst as soon as affairs took an unfavourable turn, they volunteered to do the dirty jobs of imperial diplomacy, by advocating a lame peace and using their prestige with the socialist parties of other countries, both neutral and belligerent, to unnerve the resistance of the Entente countries by fostering dissension amongst their population.

But sentence has been so definitely passed on the guilt of German social-democracy that it is useless to discuss it any further. Much more interest attaches to the causes of the contrast between its tremendous power of organisation and the pusillanimity of its action when the aggressive policy of German imperialism put its sincerity and courage to the test.

The 4th of August was less of a surprise to many socialists outside of Germany than is now

generally believed. Jean Jaurès had voiced the feelings of practically all those who knew Germany when he said at the International Socialist Congress of Amsterdam in 1904, in his famous oratorical duel with August Bebel:

“There is a menace that hangs over Europe and the world, a menace to peace, to our liberties, to the development of the socialist and labour movement, to political and social progress at large. . . . This menace is the political impotence of German social-democracy. Certainly, you are a great and admirable party, which has given international socialism some of its most powerful and deepest thinkers, and the example of methodically coördinated action and progressively strong organisation. . . . Yet, the more your power increases, the more manifest becomes the contrast between your apparent political importance, as measured by the increasing figure of your votes and your representatives in public administration, and your real influence, your real force of action. On the day after the June elections, when you polled a three million vote, it became clear to all that you had an admirable recruiting power, but that neither the traditions of your proletariat, nor the mechanism of your constitution put you in a position to utilise this apparently colossal power.”

The most conclusive evidence of the “political impotence” of German social-democracy has al-

ways been her persistent refusal to fight militarism. At the time of my collaboration with Karl Liebknecht's antimilitarist propaganda, I had ample opportunity to see for myself how stubbornly the leaders of social-democracy refused to undertake anything which might have weakened the military machine of Prussianised Germany. So far as it did not consist of the mere utterance of non-committal platitudes, their activity was confined to combating such minor abuses of the system as the ill-treatment of soldiers by their superiors, and the insufficient payment of the non-commissioned officers and men. I happened to be associated with one of the first public utterances that attracted international attention to this attitude of German social-democracy. In January, 1906, I published in the Brussels *Peuple* an interview on the subject with the late August Bebel—the recognised leader of Social-Democracy—whose statements created quite a sensation. They were so characteristic of the fear of the German Social-Democrats even to say anything that might be interpreted as an infringement of national solidarity, and so dominated by the conviction that in case of war the masses would obey the government's orders irrespective of what social-democracy would say, that Georges Clemenceau, then editor of the Paris *Aurore*, wrote the following comment:

“We know perfectly well what Bebel would

do in case of war. He would protest, as in 1870, and would, together with a small group of his comrades, heroically face imprisonment. As to his party, and as to the 'working class' of Germany, they would be in the ranks, and use their guns and rifles against the 'working class' of France."

Alas! Clemenceau proved too optimistic, even though he expected no more than a formal protest by the leaders of German social-democracy. Not even that happened!

The persistence of the German Social-Democrats in treating militarism as taboo was such a puzzle to the foreign delegates at international congresses that most of them, for lack of a better explanation, simply believed in the accusation thrown in their faces by Gustave Hervé at the Stuttgart International Congress in 1904: "Vous autres Allemands, vous avez peur, peur, peur de la prison!"

Hervé was unjust. Until 1914, there was no lack of German Social-Democrats who showed the individual courage of putting up with imprisonment for taking part in the general activity of the party. The root of the evil lay much deeper. It was social-democracy itself, the German workers as a whole, who had in the inmost recesses of their conscience accepted German militarism as a necessary institution, against which it would be futile to rebel. If the party

had engaged in anti-militarist propaganda, they would have put Hervé in the wrong on this point by carrying out the party's decision in that case also, at the risk of any number of years in jail. They would have done so out of party discipline.

I knew enough of Germany and the Germans to be sceptical about their inclination to rebel against authority. Yet I hoped until 1914 that the very strength which their party discipline gave them and the slow but thorough action of their theoretical propaganda would ultimately create such a colossal power and such an extreme tension between the ruling classes and the proletarian block that revolution would unavoidably follow. . . . 1914 made me realise that I had hoped against the obvious. The worst of the German system of government was that, through its systematic permeation of the whole nation, including social-democracy, with the spirit of military submissiveness, it deprived its natural opponents of the very qualities which they required to fight it.

When I was in Russia in 1917, the late George Plekhanoff, with whom I had been acquainted for several years, reminded me of a little incident that throws a characteristic light on the universal and instinctive submission of the Germans to mechanical discipline. It happened in 1906, in Mannheim, where we were both attending, as fraternal delegates, the Annual Congress of the

Social-Democratic Party. One afternoon, we, together with Karl Liebknecht, entered the exhibition building, where the Congress was then sitting. Two long parallel corridors led from the vestibule to the hall. As we were about half way down one of these, Liebknecht suddenly stopped and pointed to a board—“*Ausgang*.” We had taken the wrong corridor, but it made no difference to anybody, as the two corridors debouched into the same hall and there was nobody about except we three. Yet Liebknecht insisted on turning about, and we had to walk about fifty yards back in order to enter by the “*Eingang*” corridor. The mere idea of entering through the “*Ausgang*” was so abhorrent to Liebknecht’s mind that he would rather waste a hundred paces on going back. He was a revolutionary and an antimilitarist; but he had once been a German soldier!

In the army, a German Social-Democrat ceased to be anything but a soldier. When I was a liaison officer with the British army, I was frequently entrusted with the cross-examination of German prisoners. They mostly belonged to a Saxon Corps which remained opposite our sector for about a year. The majority of them were working men and social-democrats. Sometimes they knew me from my stay at Leipzig. In that case, after the military cross-examination, I would arrange for a private interview. Then

I did all I could to put the man at his ease, and asked him to consider me as a "*Genosse*" with whom he could have a heart-to-heart talk about purely political matters. I knew that the desire not to give anything away would not prevent him from talking freely, for nearly always the German privates proved exceedingly talkative when cross-examined and almost anxious to demonstrate in this way that they were as submissive towards the enemy officer as they had been towards their own officers until a day or two before. Yet I never succeeded in making my late "comrades" unbosom themselves more than they would have done with any other officer. They remained stiffly at attention and continued to call me "*Herr Leutnant.*" Sometimes they would even use the characteristic "*Melde gehorsamst, zu Befehl.*" They seemed constitutionally unable to forget, even for one moment, that they were talking to a superior. After several experiences of this kind, it dawned upon me that I had never understood the mind of those German workers whom I had only studied in civilian life. Not until I had faced them as soldiers standing to attention did I really know them.

German social-democracy lacked only one thing, but unfortunately it was the only indispensable thing: the will to fight the military spirit by eradicating militarism itself. It lacked this will because, unlike labour in England,



France, Belgium and all other democratic countries, the German proletariat itself was the fruit of a system that owed its development to militarism. It had no revolutionary tradition. It had, it is true, formed a great party that aimed at an overthrow of the social system, but the methods and the very thoughts of this party were but part and parcel of the spirit of national solidarity, discipline and authority—worship that was to make Germany foremost in the world. Even if they had succeeded in replacing the rule of the Kaiser by the rule of the proletariat, and in socialising production, though they would have improved the material condition of the working classes, they would not have improved the soul of the nation, which would then merely obey and worship another authority, equally oppressive of the freedom that makes life worth living. In short, they did not love freedom as we did in Western Europe, because they had never conquered it; and they were no real democrats, because they did not enjoy that minimum of political freedom and self-government that makes a democracy possible.

It took me many an hour of pitiless self-criticism before I came to this conclusion, which turned my previous admiration for German social-democracy into bottomless contempt. But it brought home to me two new truths of which I highly value the discovery: the essential impor-

tance of political democracy; and the fundamental difference between my socialist ideal, based on justice through freedom, and that of German social-democracy, based on justice through authority.

## VII

### WHY MEN FOUGHT

No, Bill, I'm not a-spooning out no patriotic tosh  
(The cove behind the sandbags ain't a death-or-glory cuss)  
And though I strafes 'em good and 'ard I doesn't hate the Boche,  
I guess they're mostly decent, just the same as most of us,  
I guess they loves their 'omes and kids as much as you or me;  
And just the same as you or me they'd rather shake than fight;  
And if we'd 'appened to be born at Berlin-on-the-Spree,  
We'd be out there with 'Ans and Fritz, dead sure that we was right.

A-standin' up to the sandbags  
It's funny the thoughts wot come;  
Starin' into the darkness,  
'Earin' the bullets 'um;  
(*Zing! Zip! Ping! Rip!*)  
'Ark 'ow the bullets 'um!  
A-leanin' against the sandbags  
Wiv me rifle under me ear;  
Oh, I've 'ad more thoughts on a sentry-go  
Than I used to 'ave in a year.

ROBERT W. SERVICE, *A Song of the Sandbags.*

My attempts to judge objectively the national characteristics of the foe might create the impression that my hatred of Prussianism was purely intellectual. On the contrary, this hatred was as instinctive and strong a passion as was my love of Germany and my desire to see the German nation free and redeemed.

If it had been otherwise, I could not have fought at all. Anybody with a little experience of combatant service will admit that hatred is a

military necessity. It is as indispensable in a war as are weapons or supplies.

This, by the way, is one of the main reasons why war should be opposed as destructive of some of the higher impulses which are necessary to the progress of mankind. For the kind of hatred necessitated and generated by a war like this is not the enlightened passion that only sees in men the victims or the instruments of a system. Nor is it the enlightening passion that, through fighting these men, leads to discernment and hatred of the system; for experience shows, on the contrary, that the fighting tends to inure to that system the very men who have set out to fight it.

I hope that in all belligerent countries there will be found a sufficient number of combatants with the courage to emancipate themselves from the sentimental and ethical cant that has been brought into fashion with the public by a conventional literature, and to say what, if they dare look it in the face, they know to be the truth of their experience. My conclusion is that the impulses which actuated most of the combatants had very little to do with the ethical motives, preached by the leaders of public opinion, for or against certain systems of government. They were accepted as more or less mythical symbols, that is all. The masses everywhere *started* fighting because they were forced to do so, or led to believe—

whether rightly or wrongly, need not concern us here—through the machinery by which a leading minority makes public opinion, that they were to defend their homes, their families and their possessions against an enemy bent on taking all this away from them. And they *went on* fighting, because fighting itself created, by the action of military discipline, the additional impulses without which it could not have lasted, to wit: the inculcation of the sense of duty, solidarity and comradeship; the suggestive power of the instincts of imitation, emulation and pride; and, chiefly, the spirit of revenge. It is obvious that all these impulses are *blind*, that is, their working is independent of the motives of the minority that disposes of the machinery through which they are created. Experience has shown that this machinery was equally effective in all European countries, whether the motives of the men at the rudder were ethically good or bad; at any rate, it was so for four years, both in the armies of the Central Powers and those of the Entente.

This at any rate applies to the European armies. From the little I have seen of the American army I take it that there was, to say the least, a much larger proportion of conscious ethical motives in its ranks than in those of any European power. This was obviously due, for a considerable part, to the higher level of popular education in America. The fact that the elemen-

tary teaching in American boys' schools is done by women and that religious bodies are, as a rule, much more permeated with ethical life than those of the European continent, probably also contributed in making the average American soldier more receptive to considerations of justice and human fairness at large. Furthermore, the American army was largely selected from amongst the best part of the young generation, which has naturally enjoyed the benefit of better educational methods. But the chief reason of the American army's greater consciousness of the ethical war-aims clearly originated in the fact that the motives of the American Government itself were disinterested. After the country had long remained neutral for lack of an immediate interest in the conflict, the war had to be made popular by a propaganda in which indignation against the brutality of Germany's aggression and methods of warfare proved the most effective means to arouse public opinion. It will be the everlasting pride and glory of the United States to have set a unique example in the world's history by engaging in a war like this for interests not particularly their own, but common to all mankind.

In Europe also, ethical motives played a large part in war propaganda. Above all, the violation of the neutrality of Belgium stirred what is conventionally called the public mind in many

countries. This especially applies to England. There the war would hardly have been popular enough in the first days had it not been for the appeal to her chivalry that was answered by the sending of an expeditionary force to redress the wrong done to Belgium. But important though this motive was, it was only with a minority of the combatants that it was strong enough to act as an actual impulse to fight.

There is, of course, a mutual reaction between what the people at home think and what the combatants at the front do. However, I am not dealing here with the motives of nations at large—which are a problem by themselves, and a very complicated one, too—but merely with the passions that make the combatant minority do the actual fighting. They are two quite different questions. It is easier to make a civilian in Chicago who reads his newspaper at breakfast curse the Kaiser and wish he could throttle the Crown Prince, than to make a soldier cross a bit of ground swept by machine-gun bullets, to go and kill people whom he has never seen and against whom he has no individual grudge. If you talk from a soap-box to a crowd at home in order to incense it against the enemy, there is no nonsense you can not make it swallow, provided that you appeal to the sense of morality and chivalry which it will take a childish pride in demonstrating. But it is a different matter

to talk to soldiers before an attack. I have known Belgian officers—especially amongst the regulars, used to the grandiloquent barrack-ground eloquence of peace-time—who thought they would improve the fighting determination of their men by talking what the men themselves despised as “patriotic stuff”; and I have heard the comments of the audience afterwards. I am thankful that I had this experience before I became an officer myself, for it has put me on my guard against a similar mistake. When, later on, I became a trench mortar officer in the Belgian army, I could not have made a so-called patriotic speech to my men even if I had been promised a V. C. for it. It is the sort of thing a General or a Secretary for War may do. If his eloquence remains within reasonable bounds, it will merely be taken by the hearers as matter-of-fact evidence that something particular is expected of them. If it has the tactlessness to overemphasise the necessity of sacrifices, which are the daily lot of the listening soldier, whilst they mean something much less personal and immediate to the speaker, its effect will be the opposite of what was intended. It will then give rise to sarcastic remarks among the men about people who ought to know what they are talking about, people who would do better to see to it that there is less plum-and-apple jam and black haricots, and people who are not going to bother very much anyway



about what will happen to Jim's "Missus" and kiddies if Jim gets "*napoooh-ed*" that night.

But for a lieutenant or a captain, who will have to face the music himself along with his men, to talk patriotism or "ethical motives" to them, would be a mistake which they would only forgive him if they were exceedingly fresh from the drilling-camp or fond enough of their leader to take a lenient view of his eccentricities. For about a year I have been in command of as brave a lot of soldiers as could be found in any army; but I knew well enough that if there were nothing to make them fight but the desire to see Germany punished for having broken a pledge, or to make the world safe for democracy, they would rather have left the fighting to others. Ninety-five per cent of them were almost illiterate peasants and laborers, who could not have pointed to Germany on a map of Europe, or answered a single elementary question about the difference between the Constitution of Germany and that of their own country. What was democracy to them? A word, no more, which at the utmost they were prepared to accept as a symbol for the realities that really mattered in their lives: their little house, their family, their cows and pigs and chickens, their potato-field and their right to sit at a certain table in the village-inn on Sunday mornings.

Why, then, did they fight? First of all, to

defend their home, their people, their cattle, their field and their rights in the village-inn against people whom they did not know, but of whom they believed that they wanted to take all these things away. This at least had made them willingly obey the order of mobilisation. But now, as months and years went by, and war became a routine, with its set rules, traditions and habits, like working in the fields or in a factory, the vision of home created a sentimental longing for it more than a militant will. Only those who knew that their home had been actually destroyed or their people ill-treated by the foe were still actuated by the will to follow up their *vendetta*, with a fury increased by the rage of being unable to get at close quarters with an enemy who had dug himself in so near. The desire to recover their homes did not again become a general impulse to fight until the final great offensive, which aimed at the throwing back of an enemy that for four years had prevented them from going home. To drive this enemy away, the men of Belgium and Northern France, like those of Serbia, fought with the fury that prefers knives to bayonets. But during the four years of stabilisation along the Flanders front this possibility seemed but remote. I have at that time often heard men say: "Why does not this b—— war end? After all, those b—— Boche fellows over there are just in

the same b—— mess as we are. They must be just as keen on getting home as we are.”

Something else was therefore required to make the men fight and stand hardships which seem to have put back beyond any reasonable bounds the limits of human endurance and nervous strength.

One motive common to the generality of combatants, and perhaps the most powerful and lasting, was the sense of duty. By this I mean something quite different from the desire to achieve a purpose consciously accepted as good. It was at the same time something less than that, and something more. Less, for individual reasoning had played no part in formulating the moral imperative; more, because the instinctive sacrifice to a duty not checked by self-criticism demonstrated the tremendous elementary power of the desire not to disappoint others who expect something of you. It is this instinct that makes it normal for the least educated of common labourers to do his job well. Many people who have to make others work lose sight, in the shortcomings of individuals and the petty cares and difficulties of the daily routine of industrial life, of the depth and power of this sense of duty, this natural pride of a man in his work. Leaders of industry too often forget that this moral value is the most essential of all the means of production which they control, and that therefore there

is but one problem in labour management: to encourage, to develop and to educate that instinct. I did not realise myself how much reliance could be placed on it until I experienced it as a commander of men at the front. It is one of the discoveries I made during the war, and it has done a good deal to strengthen my belief in the soundness of the fundamental social inclinations of human nature.

To those who hold a false romantic view of a soldier's life in the Great War, this likening of fighting to an industrial job may seem odd and artificial. They do not realise that most of a soldier's duty *is* work anyway. Actual individual fighting is an exception. I know many soldiers, even in the infantry, who were at the front from August, 1914, till November, 1918, and behaved like heroes, yet never had an opportunity to look an enemy in the face. But even if they had, the main motive of all their actions would not for a moment have ceased to be the same quality of self-respect that in professional life manifests itself as a workman's pride.

People who are used to think for themselves, or imagine they do, are too often inclined to take a false rationalistic view of the psychology of the masses. They ascribe all action to conscious individual reasoning and fail to realise that the majority of ignorant peasants and labourers, who formed the bulk of European armies, were but an

instrument for the accomplishment of other people's thoughts. Perhaps it is as difficult for these rationalists to understand mass psychology as it is for the superior intellect of man to comprehend the working of an animal's brain. Let us keep in mind, then, that the individuals who formed the masses referred to were accustomed from their childhood to take for granted the ethical imperatives which they saw everybody around them accept. Those who did not accept them became outcasts, or at least ran the risk of suffering such disagreeable consequences as to make acceptance of the ruling of public opinion the most commodious course to an ordinary mind.

When the war broke out, the imperative was: to obey the orders of the powers that be; which, for the soldiers, meant to fight. It was proclaimed through all the channels that usually direct the actions of men: the state, whose power, moreover, appeared suddenly to have reached overwhelming proportions; law and justice; the newspapers; the churches; the schools; the political parties; in short, through the whole machinery that forms public opinion. Not to accept its ruling meant to put oneself beyond the pale of human society. No ordinary human being felt even tempted to do it. For the imperative of patriotic duty was equipped with those attributes of sacrifice to the common good that appeal to all the social impulses of man. Who obeyed it earned

praise and admiration, who shirked it was despised and execrated by everybody around him.

Once in the ranks, the average soldier felt the same disposition not to deceive those who expected certain things of him, and who therefore equipped him, paid him and looked after his needs, as he had been used to feel in civil life towards his employer. He grumbled when he thought that the other party was not fairly observing the terms of the contract, by neglect or avarice, but he nevertheless considered himself bound to do his part. Being a soldier means to be a piece of a huge mechanism of which all parts are clearly interdependent. The chiefs must care for their subordinates' well-being, and are responsible for their behaviour; therefore they must be obeyed. But there is more: a soldier's life or death depends on his comrades doing what is expected of them. Here the instinct of solidarity comes into play, one of the most imperious in the life of masses habituated to live in common, to suffer in common, and to act in common. The longer the military association lasts, and the richer the experience of the need for comradeship grows, the more this impulse becomes dominating.

There are some who are more afraid of death than most men, while with the bravest there are moments when fear threatens to have the best even of comradeship. Here discipline inter-

venes. It is primarily the habit, which eventually becomes a need, to do certain things automatically, as the result of drilling. A man who faces the bayonet of an opponent, even though he be afraid, will not as a rule have his will paralysed by fear, for it is now governed by the reflex with which he has been inculcated on the drilling-ground, where he got into the habit of making certain corresponding movements with his own bayonet. The desire to get at the enemy's throat that was wont to be awakened by these movements as he faced an imaginary foe on the drill ground is now recalled by association. Discipline smothers fear. Again, even if the force of habit acquired by drilling fails, there is the menace of the officer's pistol or of the court martial with its power to inflict a death more certain than the one that threatens on the battlefield—and ignominious into the bargain. But these are exceptions, though they are not by any means as rare as most people think. As a rule, the latent power of the disciplinary machine to oppose the fear of death in front by the fear of death behind is, in the soldier's mind, but the supreme symbol of the imperative of duty and solidarity. It is characteristic enough in this respect that in those bodies of troops where, as in the Russian army under the Soviet régime, courts martial were composed of soldiers, their sentences against cowards or deserters from duty

were more merciless than those of the officers' courts had been.

On the other hand, conspicuous obedience to the commands of duty results, or may result, in rewards, as the praise of the officers, mentions in despatches or in the order of the day, decorations or promotion. Soldiers of a certain experience are much more sceptical about the value of these than is civilian opinion, for they know too well how little justice and discrimination is often used in conferring certain of these distinctions. When, however, they really confirm the suffrages of the hero's comrades, they are all the more valued. Anyway, they always carry with them a sufficient amount of consideration to be appreciated by those who earn them or expect to do so. Perhaps these are but a minority, but this minority is usually composed of those who, having more ambition, initiative, and desire to be distinguished above the others, are the natural leaders whom the herd follows.

There is another fundamental instinct of man that makes him willing to fight the more the longer the fighting lasts: his desire to retaliate for blows he has suffered himself, or has seen inflicted on his comrades.

In this connection I remember an incident that throws a characteristic light on soldiers' psychology in trench warfare. It happened in March, 1917, in the Belgian lines in front of



Dixmude, where I was then in position with my trench mortar battery, a short distance in rear of our first line. The latter was only about thirty-five yards away from the enemy, who held the opposite bank of the Yser. Things had been fairly quiet for some time, except for desultory bombardments in the rear and the usual machine-gun and rifle fire at night. The natural consequence was that the fighting *morale* of the infantry fell rather low. I must add that there was a certain amount of discontent on account of various extraordinary hardships that had resulted from a long spell of severe cold. Perhaps, also, the news of the revolution in Russia and of the fraternisations on the Eastern front had suggested imitation in the minds of a few light-headed boys. Be that as it may, for a few days in succession there had been a kind of tacit truce along the first line, with several attempts at communication. They were timid at first, and mostly consisted in the throwing over of jocular messages. Then some Belgian soldiers threw letters across with the request to send them on to their families in occupied territory. Finally a few men got up on the parapet on both sides and talked to each other as well as they could. As far as I could make out, the contents of their conversation were quite harmless, and mostly in the nature of jocular remarks about the duration of the war and similar

subjects of common interest. Yet, needless to say, the whole trend of affairs was such as to expose the culprits to severe disciplinary punishment, though it probably escaped the notice of their officers, who were some distance away, as the first line was but a system of outposts very thinly held. I overheard some of the remarks of my own men, who were, like myself, watching events from the rear, and others were reported to me later on. They were all more or less to this effect: "What's the harm, after all, in talking to these chaps? They've been pretty decent of late. They haven't thrown over no grenades for more than a week. They are poor blokes like us. Their positions aren't a rap more comfortable than ours, you know, and the frost must have cut off their supplies of potatoes just like ours. They say their officers are brutes. . . . They say their women and children are hungry. . . . Aren't they men like us? I bet they care for their own people, and want to get back home just as much as us!"

Suddenly a shot rang out from our line, and reports say that a man dropped from the German parapet. A Belgian officer, whose action, by the way, was diversely judged by his comrades, had fired it. The Germans retaliated with a few grenades, and after a couple of minutes the whole place was as "lively" as ever before. Blood had flowed, and called for blood. Pale

faces and drawn features told of hatred inflamed by the spirit of revenge. Everything that had been said about "those poor blokes over there" was forgotten. They were "Boches" and "grey vermin" once again. I think if I had allowed my men to send a few "flying pigs" over to them—for which there was no tactical need—they would have kissed my hands.

Then it struck me that the shot that had created such a revulsion of feelings was like a symbol of the first shot that, on the first day of the war, had hit a man somewhere in Europe, and awakened his comrades' thirst for revenge.

The same apparent contradiction in the soldiers' feelings towards the enemy will have struck anybody who has witnessed many scenes with prisoners. You could see one of our men come limping from an attack with a bandaged leg, his face still pale, his lips still blue and tightly pressed, his eyes still bloodshot with the intensity of his fury. This man has lived for an hour, perhaps, with no other desire than to kill Germans, to kill them with his bayonet rather than with a bullet, to kill them by crashing their brains out with his rifle-butt rather than by pushing his bayonet through their body, to kill them with the nails of his fingers or his teeth through their throat rather than with his rifle-butt—and the accomplishment of this desire was more imperious to him than the fear

of being killed himself, than pity for a human life, than any other thing in the world.

He meets a wounded German prisoner who, perhaps an hour ago, was possessed by the same fury, who maybe has even killed some of this man's pals. Yet this man will cheer "Fritz" up by some rude, jocular remark, whose coarse humour but faintly hides the native intonation of human sympathy. Not a minute later you will see him giving a cigarette to Fritz and lighting it for him, and if Fritz proves a little less able to walk than himself, he will lend him a helping arm and they will hobble off together . . . .

These again are exceptions, but this sort of scene was to be witnessed any number of times and, as far as I know, in any army of white men. I fancy it would have struck some of our civilian Boche-eaters with awe if they had been able to see it. Whenever I did so, it filled me with gratitude to the power that, through the darkest night of hatred, allowed some sparks from the glowing fire of human kindness to remain alight. And yet I, too, have often wished I could use my finger-nails or my teeth instead of my bayonet. . . .

This I am not ashamed to admit. It is what hatred means, and it is this sort of hatred, made of the elementary impulses I have just mentioned, which makes soldiers fight, and which I have called a military necessity. If you desire

the end, you must accept the means. If you fight, you must fight well. There are principles of efficient fighting, just as there are principles of efficient working. A fundamental principle of all warfare is that efficient tactics must be offensive, even though they may be part of a defensive strategical plan. To be fit for offensive action, the soldier must be actuated by the desire to get at close quarters with the enemy. And—though it may sound crude to those civilians who dream of throttling the Crown Prince, but whose flesh creeps at the thought of killing a fowl—one does not get at close quarters with the enemy for the purpose of sticking a flower in his buttonhole, but in order to kill him. Even though you hate Kaiserism, or any other *ism*, you simply cannot kill unless you hate the *man* who opposes you because of the colour of his uniform, and for as long as he carries a weapon with which he may kill you or your comrades.

I confess to have felt this hatred, and to have fostered it with my men, and I have no other excuse to offer than that it was a necessary part of doing my duty as a soldier and as an officer. This is one of the very reasons why I hate war. I have fought in this war because I thought it had to be done to make a lasting peace possible. And I thank God that I have been able to cleanse my soul from hatred as soon as fighting ceased to be a duty.

But there is military hatred and civilian hatred. Civilian hatred, however passionate, may be purely hostility against a system of government or of thought, or against men who have been proven responsible for that system. In that case, it is sacred. But it ceases to be worthy of any respect when it takes the form of somebody's bragging declamation against men whom he is certain he will never face and in regard to whom he will never himself experience what it means to have to destroy life. When to preach the doctrine of hatred is (as now it often seems to be) but a hypocritical means to get rid of a clever commercial competitor, it is wholly despicable. Even when it is the expression of a sincere passion, it will always strike the combatant, who has paid the toll of military hatred to the necessities of war, as a useless, thoughtless and tactless exhibition of feelings that should have proved their genuineness by deeds alone. It is a distinct menace to the intellectual and moral life of a people that indulges in it.

This will explain why, whenever I thought it necessary to encourage the fighting determination of my men before an action that involved the probability of heavy losses, I carefully avoided anything that resembled a patriotic oration. I knew that it would be received with inward contempt by men who wanted no explanation as to why they ought to die. The fact that they

were there meant that they knew they were expected to do their soldier's job. They could be trusted to do it—and a ghastly, horrible job it was—if I, for my part, did mine. All they expected of me was to show them by my deeds that I could be relied on as a leader, who would cool-headedly do the thinking for them and never leave them in the lurch. I knew that, if my strength did not fail me, they would follow me to the death. Just before the decisive moment came, then, I would say to one of my men, who I knew, in spite of his good-will, suffered from funk, that I trusted him as a brave soldier and that, if he did well, he might expect a distinction that he would deserve all the more, as he was so handicapped by his nerves. To a corporal, known to me as being ambitious, I would make a casual observation about his chances of becoming a sergeant. To some of the boys who would certainly spread the news round quickly—the signallers or the cooks by preference—I would remark that the general had purposely selected our unit for the job ahead, because he thought its success so very important. And at the last minute, I would shout to them all: "Now, boys, let us show them we have not forgotten Corporal A and Privates B and C!" (the names of men killed a fortnight before). This was about the climax of eloquence I reached during my military career, but I never have had any reason to

doubt that it suited the purpose more than any great speech that would have appealed to weak brains instead of relying on strong instincts.

At first sight my scepticism about the high ethical order of the motives that make men fight may seem to contradict my belief in the power of the sentiment of justice that inspired the people of the Entente countries with a fighting determination greater than that which the most powerful military machine of the world had been able to instil into the people of the Central Empires.

This contradiction is but apparent. I am not blind to the fact that the higher order of the war aims pursued by the democratic nations of Western Europe, and the greater strength they gave their populations to stand the stress of this war, is the ultimate reason of their victory. Both the German army and the German people have shown a capacity for sacrifice which would compel boundless admiration if it had been displayed in a better cause, and which, even as it is, fills one with a sort of involuntary pride in considering what a nation of white men can achieve when it is strongly organised and fired by a common aim. But what was this sacrifice in comparison with that to which our western democracies consented for the sake of self-defence! The very fact that they had to fight, though loving peace and hating militarism, al-



ready put them above a nation of soldiers, drilled to the belief in militarism as a means to secure their "place in the sun." Moreover, Germany had, militarily, the upper hand for four years, fought her wars on enemy territory, and had victories on all fronts to console her for her losses. But what of us? Our armies were held in check on our own territories, and for nearly four years it seemed as though no offensive, however lavish of human life, would ever be able to hurl the invader back. Many a time he threatened, as in the spring of 1918, to resume his annihilating sweep of 1914. Yet the darkest hours were those of the grimmest determination. We could lose and go on fighting. The Germans could not. After a few weeks of adversity in the summer of 1918, although their orderly and slow fighting retreat from France and Belgium was a strategic victory as compared with the rout to which they had put some of our armies on the Somme, on the Lys and in Champagne a few months before, their power of nervous resistance collapsed in a catastrophe of a magnitude and suddenness unique in the history of the world. They could fight only with victory on their side, because they had no other purpose than victory and domination. We, however, fought in spite of defeat, because we were fighting for something higher than a vic-

tory of arms. The superiority of our *morale* was due to the superiority of our aims.

This, by the way, made me realise from the outset that ideal forces, like the attachment to liberty, the spirit of justice and of chivalry, played a much greater part in history than was dreamt of in the Marxian philosophy that had thus far confined my outlook too exclusively to the economic aspect of things. But to understand how these ideal forces worked, one has to analyse the psychological mechanism through which the abstract notion of a nation's will manifests itself in the concrete order as a complex of actual individual impulses. When we examine the facts in the everyday life of the combatants, we find that even in the democratic armies of the Entente it was only with a minority that conscious and enlightened acceptance of the higher motives of the nation's policy was the mainspring of action. To acknowledge this fact is not to sin against the spirit of democracy. Democracy would not be worse served if those who, like myself, ardently believed in it, loved it with a little more discernment and realised that the idea of self-government of the masses is in its literal sense a myth. In no democratic country on earth is there more than a minority who take a conscious interest in public affairs. Majorities are the instruments through which minorities rule. In this democracy, in its present stage of

development at least, resembles all previous, non-democratic forms of government. It differs from them, first, by the fact that the ruling minority is larger than in any autocracy or oligarchy; then, because this minority, in order to obtain power, disposes of no means of physical coercion and must therefore rely on the machinery of public education, the press, the churches, official organs of "public information," and other means of persuasion to create the required disposition in the "public mind"; and lastly, because the necessity to use these means of persuasion, and the competition of parties, movements and factions, unavoidably result in the indefinite increase of the quantity and the quality of those who take a thinking citizen's part in the government of the nation. It is chiefly because of this last reason that democracy is superior to all previous methods, for it allows of continuous self-improvement. The great value of democracy as it exists is not that it actually means self-government of all the people by all the people, but that it is the only way which ultimately leads to self-government of the people by as large a number as are capable of participating therein. In the meantime, however, let us acknowledge the fact that in every existing democracy the impulses that make the masses act are but an unconscious reflex of the motives of the ruling minorities who make public opin-

ion. These impulses are seldom inspired by purely ethical or intellectual considerations. They either rest on the realisation of a supposed or real interest, or result from the action of such machinery as that of military discipline, with the wonderful stimulus it gives to the instincts of imitation, emulation, solidarity and revenge.

The interest of an analysis of the mechanism of fighting psychology, independently of what we may symbolically call the nation's will, resides in the following conclusion that is to be drawn from it. In the hitherto prevailing European system of compulsory popular armaments as instruments of international competition, it was always possible for any ruling power, even in a democratic country, to make its army fight. All that is necessary is that the elementary precaution be taken to formulate a pretext, plausible enough to popular credulity to set the machinery in motion. As all modern wars show, this pretext has always been easy to find, and almost invariably consists in the assumption of a defensive purpose. Once the machinery has started moving, it collects sufficient impetus to move on towards any goal, by the mere play of the progressive accumulation of fighting impulses generated through fighting itself.

In his admirable book, "Why Men Fight," Bertrand Russell has emphasised the necessity,

for all those who would like to do away with war and militarism, to tackle the problem at its psychological roots. It is of course equally, or even more important, that it should be studied from the economic and political viewpoint, in order to gain a clear understanding of the changes in our social and international status that are an essential condition to lasting peace. Yet it would be wrong to assume, as a carelessly superficial version of Marx's economic interpretation of history has too often done, that there are no other causes of militarism and war than economic competition and the political ambitions that result from it. Militarism itself, namely the very existence of more or less permanent armies in autonomous states, and its unavoidable encouragement of latent fighting impulses, is a possible cause of war. Economic competition between states can work itself out without resort to actual violence, just as conflicts between individuals can be settled without the help of their fists, or as labor conditions can be readjusted without recourse to the *ultima ratio* of strike or lock-out.

It has been said that Germany might have pursued her aim of boundless economic expansion and world hegemony by the mere use of her means of "peaceful penetration," and with a better chance of success, rather than by risking everything on a war. This remark is only true insofar as it relates to what might have been the

policy of the German nation if it had been inspired exclusively by an enlightened view of the permanent interest of its majority, and not by the immediate and actual interest of the ruling classes and powers. For these ruling interests were not identical with those of the masses. This, again, is a fact largely, though not exclusively, due to the existence of militarism as an unconstitutional, but extremely effective power within the state, and of a military caste; with no interest but war, within the ruling classes themselves. The existence of the instrument creates the temptation to use it. This tendency is so inherent to any permanent army, even in a democratic country, that one has a right to be sceptical about the power of any measure, short of universal disarmament, to insure a lasting peace.

## VIII

### HEROISM

. . . . Psha! the courage to rage and kill is cheap. I have an English bull terrier who has as much of that sort of courage as the whole Bulgarian nation, and the whole Russian nation at its back. But he lets my groom thrash him, all the same. That's your soldier all over! No, Louka: your poor men can cut throats; but they are afraid of their officers; they put up with insults and blows; they stand by and see one another punished like children—aye, and help to do it when they are ordered. And the officers!—well (*with a short bitter laugh*) I am an officer. Oh, (*fervently*) give me the man who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience: he alone is the brave man.

G. B. SHAW, *Sergius in Arms and the Man*, III.

THERE were many other aspects of soldiers' psychology that increased my abhorrence of war and militarism. I deem it a duty to discuss them without fear of hurting the sensitiveness of well-intentioned patriots and hero-worshippers. Even in our peace-loving democratic countries, which entered the Great War to do away with militarism, the necessity to use military means for that purpose has created, with a large section of the population, a kind of enthusiasm that, if it be not checked, will make the remedy we have used to cure the world of military intoxication worse than the evil itself. I am not thinking here of the small minority of those who, in every country, professed bellicose enthusiasm out of mate-

rial interest, but of the much larger class of people who are benevolently misled in their valuation of the influence of military life on men. The motives of this class are usually highly praiseworthy. They have got into the habit of thinking of their boys in uniform with such genuine admiration that they have unconsciously become a prey to the shallow romanticism, encouraged by a literature largely based on fictions and conventions, that equips every soldier with imaginary virtues, and finally believes in the virtue of fighting itself. Yet their error is not the less dangerous for being intelligible.

From my own experience I would say that, in the huge majority of cases, the influence of warfare on a combatant results in a considerable lowering of his moral level.

Exceptions are fairly numerous. They are mostly to be found in the class of those who, having taken up arms out of a well-considered conviction of the justice of their cause, are on a sufficiently high intellectual level to use their experience as a means of spiritual self-improvement.

I do not know how large a percentage of the American army this element constitutes, although I am sure that it is considerably higher than in European armies. Besides, the bulk of the American Expeditionary Force have enjoyed the privilege of taking part in the final



stages of the campaign, when the fast movement of events and the continuous activity did not allow the original idealistic colour of their motives to fade away with time. They have not had the experience of year-long trench warfare which, being a routine by itself, developed its peculiar psychological influence, it is this influence which has been the dominating factor with the vast majority of European armies to which I am referring.

It should be kept in mind, besides, that the composition of European armies, with their compulsory enlistment of practically all men up to fifty or fifty-five years of age, was very different from that of the American armies. Many an American mother, especially amongst the upper classes, will have shed tears of joy in welcoming her boy back home from the front, and finding that the spoilt child had become a strong, hardy, wideawake man. No doubt, in many of these cases, the physical improvement will have been accompanied by a wholesome strengthening of the character, if it were only because of the effect the health of the body normally has upon the health of the soul. A similar change for the better has undoubtedly taken place with a large number of young Europeans, to whom the change from a sedentary occupation or from comfortable idleness to a life in the open with plenty of exercise has been a real boon. Well-

to-do people are often inclined to infer, by thoughtless generalisation from their experience within a limited circle of relatives and acquaintances, that this is equally true of the majority outside of their particular class. They forget that this majority, in Europe at any rate, consists of peasants and working men, half of whom are fathers of families and above the age of twenty-eight. They had not the same need of physical exercise or life in the open as the gilded youth of the upper hundred thousand. To them the struggle for their daily bread has been as good a school of self-help and self-reliance as any. It is this class that forms the overwhelming majority of the population of Europe, a majority whose attitude of mind more and more becomes a decisive element in the evolution of social and political conditions on the Old Continent. Therefore we should try to understand their mind by studying it from a different viewpoint than that of our own class outlook.

One common belief is that the necessities of fighting develop a courage which results in a lasting and beneficial increase of will-power. It is this romantic attitude of the civilian mind that sees a hero in every man in uniform and therefore believes that the generation of the Great War is going to be of a superior moral quality.

So let us first agree on what heroism is. To kill another man does not necessarily make one

a hero; on the other hand, it is a commonplace truth that heroism may manifest itself in other fields than fighting. Heroism is a capacity of the will to subjugate impulses or circumstances adverse to the fulfilment of a duty dictated by conscience. Any victory of the spirit over the flesh fought within a man's mind may require heroism. Captain Guynemer was a hero, but so were Columbus, Pasteur, Abraham Lincoln and Beethoven. And some of the finest examples of heroism displayed in this war were set by non-combatants of the medical service or among the chaplains.

The commonest form of heroism in war is victory of the sense of duty over fear. If there were a man who has fought without the experience of fear, I would not call him a hero at all, for then fighting meant no more to him than any sporting achievement. But I doubt whether such a man has ever existed. To anybody who has frequently been under fire and yet claims that he has never been afraid, I would quote the opinion of Marshal Ney, whose record is a presumption that he knew something of the subject: *Celui qui se vante de n'avoir jamais eu peur est un sacré jean-foutre.*

It is in the nature of contemporary warfare, with its constant menace of sudden pain and death from a distant and mostly invisible enemy, to make fear largely dependent on imagination.

It is not in the brunt of battle that "funk" is most common, for then action itself generates such antidotes as anger or concentration of the mind on actual events; it is in the moments which precede action, and under any circumstance that makes one realize the omnipresence of danger without the resource of being able to do anything to escape from it.

I do not feel that I am boasting when I say that my record at the front is not that of a coward; for I believe that any healthy young man with normal nerves is usually able to check his fear to a sufficient extent so as not to be hampered in his combatant action. So there is but little more merit in not being a coward than there is in having a good stomach. Cowardice has been the exception in any of the armies that were engaged in the Great War; and in nine out of ten cases when it occurred, a doctor, even without being a specialist in nervous diseases, would have been able to ascribe it to some definite physiological or psychological defect. But fearlessness is just as exceptional.

I for one confess that there has been hardly a week of the nearly three years which I spent at the front when I did not feel "funk." Sometimes, even, a shrewd observer might have been able to discern it by exterior evidence, from the mere nervous chewing of a pipe-stem to the characteristic ghastliness of the face that accompanies

“yon funny feeling in the stomach” which often results from an “increased volume of the enemy fire.” The first time I felt it was right in the early days of the war, when my company started on a march in the direction of distant but plainly audible gunfire. But even after an experience of more than two years, I still suffered from “funk,” especially when I had to remain inactive under a bombardment. I might even say that I lived in a state of chronic fear, for there was hardly a minute when I was free from the consciousness of danger and the desire to reduce the chances of being hit. When I walked along a communication trench I would always keep to the safest side, and when passing behind a low parapet, I would be careful to keep my head down at least as much as was necessary, even though the chances of being hit were very slight indeed. It is largely to this caution that I ascribe my escaping unhurt, although, as the experience of most of my comrades showed, the odds were greatly against me.

Now, the sort of precautions I just referred to were by no means generally used by soldiers and officers, for exactly the same reasons that account for the recklessness of workmen who get so used to the dangers of their profession that they lose consciousness of them. Most of those who were cautious, on the other hand, were so under the influence of habit, as a mere acquired reflex action.

It was otherwise with me, for the consciousness of danger never left me and I almost continuously used reasoning to improve my chances of remaining unhurt. This even developed into a mania. I often caught myself carefully weighing in my mind all the chances of being hit by some missile in some particular spot as compared with another spot a couple of yards away, taking into account almost imponderable circumstances, to the utmost extent of my intellectual ability. The disproportion between the intellectual effort and the irrelevancy of the object of my analysis often struck me and eventually made me realise that I had gotten into the habit of using reflection as a means to bridle my imagination and to distract fear. I have known a few other soldiers who confessed to me that when "alone with their thoughts" in some more or less dangerous spot they used the same method. They also were afflicted with a power of imagination above the average. It is worth noting that the fear they would have felt if they had given their fancy the rein would not at all, in view of the anodyne circumstances, have paralysed or handicapped them for action. Therefore, I would rather ascribe this desire of escaping the effects of even slight fear to the intuition that any degree of "funk" results in considerable nervous strain. One's instinct to save himself useless fatigue made one naturally try to avert this.

With the large majority of soldiers, however, whose power of imagination did not exceed the average, and in whose every-day actions individual reasoning played but a small part, there were but two great antidotes to fear: habit and anger.

I had never fully realised the power of habit until I saw the miracles it worked at the front. The effect of heavy shellfire, for instance, that constantly threatens sudden, cruel laceration by a mass of steel that may explode anywhere about you without any forewarning, is beyond expression nerve-racking to any normal human being. In the earlier stages of the campaign, the effect on our brave but unprepared troops was such that a position was usually evacuated as "untenable" as soon as any volume of artillery fire began to concentrate around it. A few months later, the same amount of shellfire would be faced with almost absolute equanimity. I remember how one day the trench mortar positions I commanded had been shelled to such an extent that with a little bad luck half of my men might have been wiped out. Fortunately, there was no worse damage than the explosion of a couple of tons of our ammunition. The whole "show" had no stronger effect on my men than to make them grumble at the prospect of the work they would have to do with sandbagging and bomb-carrying. For myself, I felt posi-

tively annoyed at the thought of having to write a long report, with a new statement of my reserve of ammunition, by the light of a flickering candle under the three feet high ceiling of my dug-out. Then I smilingly remembered how Dumouriez had almost lost the battle of Valmy, which decided the fate of Europe for a century or so, because of the panic created by the explosion of an ammunition wagon. This probably represented about one-twentieth of the total amount of high explosive that had gone up within four hundred yards of me within less than twenty minutes, with no other result than that next day's Belgian *communiqué* would perhaps mention "lively French artillery activity about Steenstraete."

Men get used to everything. It was the same with rifle bullets. An old-timer would always be able to tell a novice in trench life by some instinctive motion—a slight ducking of the head, or a glance cast aside, as if he expected to see the bullet pass—when a "blue bee" buzzed near by. Even people otherwise used to trench life, but who had been away from it for a short time, would act in a similar way, which is of course senseless, since a flying bullet is invisible and you are past danger when you hear it. It usually does not take more than a quarter of an hour in the trenches to realise this, and then less atten-



tion is paid to bullets than to the humming of an insect.

The lower the level of intellect and imagination, the quicker this inuring to danger will be. I have often noted the amazement of troops billeted in towns that were frequently bombarded, at seeing how little notice the civilian inhabitants took of the shelling. One would see the women come out of their houses to watch the shellfire that might have struck them dead any second. The hasty conclusion of the military onlooker usually was that "these people knew no fear." A wrong inference, for these same women had probably all been seized with hopeless panic when their town was first bombarded. But afterwards they got used to it all the easier as they did not realise that the distribution of the points of impact of projectiles aimed at an area that included their own little house was, within the bounds of certain mathematical laws, a mere matter of luck. Yet, somehow, they would not consider themselves as being threatened until a shell hit their immediate neighbours' house or dropped in their own garden. Then, although their chances were no worse than before, they would pack their bundle and leave. I have witnessed this sort of thing dozens of times. Every time it again strengthened my conviction that the actions of the majority of people are inspired by subconscious forces, like instinct and

habit, rather than by reasoning, even though but little elementary reasoning be required.

In actual battle, however, this familiarity with danger would fail to make soldiers immune against the paralysing influence of fear, for danger is likely then to assume forms novel and unexpected, even to veterans. Yet it is much easier to overcome fear in action, however risky, than when one has to stand enemy fire without being able to do anything to "return the compliment." In actual battle, anger and hatred are the natural antidotes of fear.

Heroism has much less to do with all this than romantic people are prone to believe, for the actions of men dominated by anger mostly lack that essential element of heroism, consciousness. The soldier who risks his life in an attack may be a hero all the same, for he may have been inspired by conscious motives—patriotism, devotion to humanity, or self-sacrifice to comradeship—of which his participation in this battle was the consequence accepted beforehand. Yet in the huge majority of cases it remains true that the intensity of blind impulses like anger or desire to kill is so great in the thick of the fray and so obliterates consciousness that there is more scope for the lowest instincts than for the highest.

By instincts of a low moral order I mean those that are not directed towards a social pur-

pose involving some personal sacrifice to a common cause, but that are destructive of such purpose and of life generally. Joy in killing is such an instinct. And my sad experience is that it is this instinct, rather than any of the higher impulses of heroism, that has been developed through fighting.

It has become a platitude to say that the few centuries of cultured life that have been the privilege of our race have only been able to modify some of the outward characteristics of the human mind, whilst the fundamental instincts that form our character are still those of our ancestors, the cave men.

There are pessimists, by the way, who infer from this that our increase of intellectual power and of knowledge has merely put a more refined instrument at the disposal of our original bad instincts, and adorned our native brutality with hypocrisy. I think they are wrong, however, in assuming as an axiom that the instincts of the prehistoric man were bad. On the contrary, I hold the optimistic belief that the fundamental instincts of our race, even if we assume that they have not changed since our ancestors dwelt in caves or forests, still serve the purposes of our present social ethics to the same extent as they did when they were the moral cement of the earlier forms of human society. For our so-called "scientific" pessimists, after

all, show a curiously unscientific want of appreciation of the social ethics of early human communities and the individual instincts resulting therefrom. They assume that these instincts were confined to a mere brutal desire of individual domination and joy in killing. This is not even true of the most primitive forms of social life. And what an abyss between these cave-dwellers and the incomparably higher level of the social institutions and ethics of our race during the many centuries that immediately preceded Christian civilisation! Therefore, I do not believe that the solution of the problem of ethical education nowadays consists in the eradication of those primitive social impulses by "intellectual enlightenment." I rather see it as a higher synthesis in which these impulses would be utilised and progressively brought under the control of conscience.

This programme sounds modest enough after nineteen centuries of Christianity; but has this war not again made clear that even now, in spite of Christian ethics and political democracy, what we pride ourselves on as civilisation or culture is still the superficial appanage of a hundred thousand, whilst the pittance of the masses consists of a few crumbs from their table? This is as true in the field of ethics as in that of art, knowledge or hygiene. Even when these masses follow the lead of a thinking minority, they are but obeying

the obscure ancestral instincts. So modern democracy, especially since the Great War has made these masses a decisive factor in history, still finds itself confronted with the old problem: to make human civilisation a real civilisation of all men and women. This can only be done by providing their mass instincts with the conscious guidance of the intellect. Any attempt, based on a rationalistic philosophy or on Utopian desires, to impose upon these masses a conception of the brain or an ethical imperative contrary to the native instincts and material interests that are the driving power of their common actions, would be doomed to failure. All that human intellect can do at our present stage of social progress is to enlighten those collective passions so as to keep them from being destructive of the common good. Then they are bound to serve progress. If even this scheme does not prove too ambitious, we shall have reason enough to congratulate ourselves.

Even such racial instincts as result from the fighting activity of our ancestors, normally at war with animals, their neighbours or other tribes, although at first sight they seem to be destructive of life, can be made to serve the purpose of human improvement. For this improvement is a dialectic process in which fighting qualities are required of those on whom the victory of progress over the retrogressive tenden-

cies depends. Has the Great War for "democracy and a lasting peace" not proved to all true Christians that "fighting the battles of the Lord" is more than a figure of speech? Is not the right of insurrection a cornerstone of all the historic statements which, like the American Declaration of Independence or the French *Droits de l'Homme*, form the universal charter of democracy—a democracy born of the exercise of that right? Is not combativity, the continuous exercise of the "unalienable right to kick," within the organised bounds of the party system as without, an essential condition to progress in any self-governing country, and part of the very spirit of democracy? Is not the idea of the self-government of nationalities, which has triumphed in the war through the defeat of the dynastic principle, inseparable from the desire to defend this self-government against any menace from abroad? Is not the very existence of a League of Civilised Nations conditioned by its readiness to fight for the maintenance of its constitutional pact either against a felonious confederate, or against the aggression of, say, a less civilised power from outside?

And on the other hand, have not our inherited fighting and hunting instinct, through combining with man's intellectual curiosity, created the spirit of adventure to which modern civilisation

owes its splendour, its wide expansion, and its fast progress?

Are not those instincts the psychological basis of the sporting life which, by promoting chivalry, fair play, modesty in triumph and dignity in defeat, proves almost as great a benefit to the ethics of a nation as to its bodily health? Do we not commonly measure any man's sense of honour by his readiness to fight for it, whether it be with his sword, his fists, or with the means that the organisation of social justice and public opinion put at his disposal?

I have indulged in this digression because I do not want to be misunderstood when I oppose joy in killing as a morally low instinct to combative heroism as a high ethical impulse. Both are the outcome of those fighting instincts we have inherited from our ancestors, the warriors and hunters. Both have been fostered by the war. The combative spirit at large I call a good instinct, because it is a necessary condition to social progress; joy in killing I call bad, for it is destructive of social life.

Yet while the combative spirit that makes heroes out of men finds a natural outlet in almost any field of human activity, and therefore needed no war for its development, the old slumbering instinct that makes a man enjoy his power to destroy and to kill has been called back to life. This war has aroused it in millions as nothing

else could have done. If those who have unbridled it could but know how immensely powerful it is! The supreme joy it gives to a man who realises his power to live by his ability to take another's life, calls imperiously for repetition, for killing again, for killing more and more!

I had thought myself more or less immune from this intoxication until, as a trench mortar officer, I was given command over what is probably the most murderous instrument in modern warfare. At any rate, by combining the destructive power of heavy artillery with the close range and easy observation of infantry fighting, it gives one the most intense realisation of destructive power. One day, after expending a few rounds on finding the range, I secured a direct hit on an enemy emplacement, saw bodies or parts of bodies go up in the air, and heard the desperate yelling of the wounded or the runaways. I had to confess to myself that it was one of the happiest moments of my life. "You didn't half look funny when we sent them Boches up, lieutenant," said my observing signaller as he sat down, rubbing his hands contentedly, to a mug of coffee in my dugout. "Gosh! didn't you turn pale, and didn't you just open big eyes, and didn't you yell—almost as loud as them Fritzes themselves what runned away!" The fellow was right, and made me feel ashamed



that I had broken my golden rule never to show emotion to my men. But then, as I recollected those minutes so crowded with thoughts and events that they leave a man exhausted of nervous strength, I realised that I had yelled with delight, that I could have wept with joy and, if I had dared to, kissed the man next to me, who was as excited as I. What are the satisfactions of scientific research, of a successful public activity, of authority, of love, compared with this ecstatic minute when you see how your brains, your nerves, your careful nursing of the killing machine entrusted to you have given *you* this power to take life away from those who are striving to take it away from you! Oh, how tame and petty seems ordinary life in comparison with this! If I could only obey the will of my animal instinct, I would this very day start on a journey of ten thousand miles if by so doing I might enjoy something analogous to a "direct hit" and revive the rapture of those voluptuous seconds.

Now, fortunately enough, I have to obey other voices than those of such instincts, and so do most men; otherwise we should all be rogues and murderers. As soon as I realised the bestiality of my joy, my conscience felt such a burning shame that its impression will probably be as lasting as that of the incident that caused it. I know of a few friends who have similarly suf-

ferred, and felt the same wave of remorse. But I also know that the majority of men have felt the ecstasy of killing *without* this sense of contrition. I am certain that by making millions of ignorant peasants and laborers—whose instincts have never known any law but their interest and the commonly accepted traditions of their class—taste the brutish delight of killing, a phantom has been conjured up more easily than it will be banished. Should conditions arise in the life of these masses that either make it in their interest to murder, or else create a common feeling in favour of class terrorism, they might remember how easy it is to take another man's life, and what a delight there is in doing it. Criminality in Europe is already alarmingly on the increase since the beginning of demobilisation; political assassination is the order of the day; and there is a distinct tendency towards the use of violence in the social upheavals that threaten to spread all over Europe. It is true there are some obvious economic causes for all this, and that these may be temporary, but the psychological causes are perhaps equally important, and they will last at least as long as the present generation. Who would not, in view of these facts, be seized with the apprehension that the immediate effect of the war on the masses who fought it may have been to make brutes rather than to create heroes?

As far as the Central Powers are concerned, there is no doubt about the answer to this question. Even before the end of hostilities, there was already a terrific increase of criminality, especially amongst deserters or men on leave from the front, and amongst the adolescent imitators of their elder brothers in *Feldgrau*. Besides, the masses of the civilian population were constantly tempted, or even compelled, to infringe the laws and regulations on food supplies and similar subjects, not based on conscious popular consent, but imposed by the ruling powers. The complete disruption of the normal relationship of the sexes, moreover, resulted in a veritable moral dissolution of the nation. All this undoubtedly played a large part in the final breakdown of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Similar conditions would already have resulted in similar results in Western Europe if their influence had not been counteracted by the higher ethical war aims, which eventually proved a better means of keeping up both *morale* and morals than any appeal to national pride and lust of conquest. There is all the more reason to fear the unbridling of the beast should the allied governments succumb to the temptation to misuse their victory, forget the ideals for which they have made a generation sacrifice itself, and betray the hope of a better world that they have awakened in the masses.

It is self-evident that an analysis of the ethical reaction of actual fighting does not by any means exhaust the problem of the influence of the war on human psychology. Even if we confine our analysis to the armies, we should keep in mind that combatants proper form a minority in every one of them, and that even as far as this minority is concerned, actual fighting was only one of the numerous occupations that have influenced their frame of mind. I have focussed my disparagement of popular romanticism upon the effect of fighting, because it seems to me that this is the subject on which clarification is most needed. But there are other aspects of soldiers' psychology which I cannot extensively dwell upon here, but which might equally well be taken as objects of a similar analysis, and lead to a similar conclusion. There, also, it would be quite different from widespread misconceptions.

One of these is the belief in the favorable influence of discipline on the formation of young men's characters. Now there are, again, two sides to this question. It is obvious, on the one hand, that military discipline is likely to have a beneficial effect on spoiled children and on the egotism of young intellectuals. In a more general way, every soldier has had so many opportunities of realising what a paramount necessity there is in warfare to obey the orders of responsible leaders, that this realisation must have done

a good deal to strengthen the spirit of self-sacrifice for common purposes. But I believe that this favourable influence is at least balanced by the detrimental effect of discipline on personal initiative and activity. This at any rate applies to the disciplinary methods that prevailed in continental European armies, which were all more or less inspired by the Prussian model. My experience with soldiers of the so-called lower classes has taught me that after several years of military discipline they will have lost many of the qualities that are required of good and useful citizens. They become so used to be looked after by their chiefs, to do nothing but what they are ordered to do, and not to care about anything for which anybody else can be made responsible, that they lose much of their spirit of initiative and self-reliance. This seems to be corroborated by the actual experience of many people who have had good reason to complain about the indolence of discharged soldiers whom they have employed.

Another widespread exaggeration is in the belief that by sending millions of soldiers into far-away countries a very great deal has been done towards spreading knowledge of foreign languages and conditions, widening the outlook, and creating new bonds of friendship between the populations of the allied countries. Now it is obvious that experience of foreign countries

has been gained, new ties between their peoples created, and incentives towards the learning of foreign languages given on such an enormous scale as would not have been possible but for this world war. But it will be wise, I think, not to be too sanguine about the better mutual comprehension of national civilisations that may result therefrom. The people who make this mistake have no accurate representation of what the actual conditions were under which the contact between armies and populations took place. What has the French peasant who has had Tommies or Sammies billeted in his farm, or the Italian haberdasher whose customers they were, learned about Anglo-Saxon civilisation? The few words of broken English which these Frenchmen or Italians have picked up may have helped them in their business—for to most people in the war-area with whom the troops came into contact, war had become an industry—but they will hardly ever become an instrument of their own culture. I once tried to get out of a shrewd old Frenchwoman, who had been billeting British officers and soldiers for a couple of years, what idea she had formed about English ways and customs. "They are not bad fellows, Sir," she reflected, "if you know how to handle them; but surely they will all die from rheumatism, for they are like ducks, they bathe and wash everyday!" From a fairly extensive ac-

quaintance with Flemish and French towns where British troops have been billeted, I would conclude that this good lady voiced the apprehensions of their inhabitants in general, who from the "duck-habits" of the occupants have drawn no other conclusion than that it results in a splashing-about detrimental to the furniture, especially if the latter is of polished mahogany.

And what have the huge majority of our Tommies and Sammies seen of France or Belgium that would make them understand and love French or Belgian civilisation? Whenever they could escape the filthy routine of billeting and estaminet-sitting in the wretched little towns of the front-area, and unless they confined themselves to their own national atmosphere in their Y. M. C. A. huts, they naturally sought solace in the shabby soldiers' entertainments which part of the population in the larger cities had made it a trade to provide. These could no more give them an idea of what is really worth knowing about the indigenous civilisation, than a week's outing in the cosmopolitan amusement quarters of Paris would acquaint an upper-class American or Englishman with the spiritual life of France.

In many cases the contact between the civilian population and the armies of another country has resulted in strengthening their sense of the excellence of their own national peculiarities, in-

stead of reducing the differences. The relations between Belgium and France are so excellent and intimate that there is hardly any risk of being misinterpreted when I say that my pretty extensive experience has convinced me that this has been the case with these two nations. Almost without any exceptions, the Belgian soldiers and refugees who spent the duration of the war in France have neither increased their own appreciation of the national characteristics that differentiate the French from them, nor have they induced the French to do the same with regard to the Belgians.

Let us examine facts instead of indiscriminately taking for granted sentimental platitudes which fit better into diplomatic speeches than into reality. Then we shall realise that more would have been done towards a greater mutual comprehension between, say, the peoples of England and France by sending a few thousand students, artists, engineers, or workingmen from one country into the other for a couple of years, to get acquainted with real life and civilisation in the Universities, Museums and workshops, than could be achieved by any Expeditionary Force.

I have been asked many a time by clergymen, especially in America, whether I thought that the war had deepened the spiritual consciousness of most of the soldiers and made them more religious. I would myself call this question the



supreme test of the psychological influence of the war on combatants, provided that religion be taken in such a broad sense that it becomes almost synonymous with idealism. But then the problem becomes so vast that I dare not answer by yea or nay. There are so many contradictory influences involved, and their relative importance varies so much according to the individuals or groups concerned, that I confess myself unable to discern what the ultimate balance will be. I would however dissuade people from overestimating the favourable effect of constant danger to life on the spiritual attitude of soldiers.

It is a popular notion, in Europe at any rate, that people whose occupation constantly confronts them with a danger that makes them seem like toys in the hands of a supernatural and eternal power, thereby become particularly religious. Sailors and deep-sea fishermen are the classical instances. It is often inferred that this must especially apply to combatant soldiers. I doubt very much, however, whether it is not merely superstition that in these cases is commonly assumed to be religion. From my experience with Flemish and French deep-sea fishermen, I would say that their attachment to the symbols of ancestral cult, their idolatry of innumerable saints, and the omnipotence of their local clergy

are less in favour of their religious turn of mind than the general level of their morality is against it. I fail to see why the case of the soldiers should be different.

On the whole, I am inclined to believe that whilst the spiritual life of a minority who were truly religious from the outset may have been deepened by their experience of war, the great majority have not had enough native idealism to counteract the brutalising influence of the circumstances they have to live in. This majority have reacted to the hardships and the uncertainty of life by seeking solace in an essentially materialistic fatalism, accompanied by an inordinate desire for coarse physical enjoyment whenever the slightest opportunity occurred. When going on short leave from the front, for instance, the general disposition of mind was to "have a good time" at any cost; and so-called pleasures, which under ordinary circumstances would have disgusted a man by their vulgarity or immorality, were then excused with the argument that perhaps it was the "last chance, anyway."

This was the case, at any rate, with the bulk of the continental armies, who had not, like the Americans and, in the later stages of their campaign, the British, the resource of the magnificent network of organisations of the Y. M. C. A. type, which have proved one of the mira-

cles of this war. Anybody with some experience of the front will understand that the natural reaction to months and years of danger, hardships, sexual continence, and privation of practically any sort of entertainment, is anything but an inducement to spiritual self-communing. I am afraid that the exceptions to this rule are few. In spite of the pains I took not to miss the intellectual and spiritual benefit of my experiences, I would not even unreservedly claim the favor of this exception on my own behalf. Life at the front has made me superstitious to the extent that even now I find it hard not to ascribe my good luck to some "mascot" or other talisman in which I confess to have believed. I have often caught myself, just before passing a peculiarly dangerous spot, in the act of straightening my deportment, fingering the buttons of my uniform to make sure that they were all right, and reflecting whether I had shaved recently enough to meet death as a smart soldier; but at such moments I gave no thought to my conscience. I remember how, being on leave in Paris once after a particularly severe spell at the front, I felt tempted by the programme of a classical concert that was to be given that afternoon by a renowned symphonic orchestra. I thought it would do me good, for I had not heard any music but soldiers' songs and ragtime improvisations for more than two years. So I went there and listened for a

couple of hours to Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. I could have wept for delight in feeling like a human being again. It was as though I had suddenly been relieved of the armour which had become identified with myself for two long years. But after it was over it seemed to me that all my strength had been taken away from me together with my armour, and that it would hurt me beyond expression to put it on again. I never felt so womanish and altogether so miserable in my life. Then I realised that it did not do a trench mortar officer a bit of good to cultivate "soft spots" by worshipping musical beauty. All he had to do was to win the war by killing "Boches." The less he was a human being, the better he would be suited for his job—and there was no other job worth doing until the war was won. So I concluded that next time, rather than concert-going, I would spend my money on a good dinner with a big bottle of wine, to make up for four months of poor meals and gather strength for another four months (perhaps—"touch wood!") to come.

I am perfectly aware that this will seem supremely silly to many people. But then perhaps they do not care for good music as much as I do—or else they have never fired a trench mortar. Under these circumstances it has cost me some very hard fighting with myself not to lose my religion, or shall I say my idealism if the for-

mer term seems inappropriate to describe the spiritual attitude of a man haughty enough to think his religion too big for the size of any church or chapel. I doubt indeed whether the war has not made me lose some of the human modesty that is the fundamental attitude of mind required by any Church. I can still feel modest when I look up to a starlit sky, or for that matter, when I lie down in the grass and stare at the flowers and the insects—but I find it very hard to bow my head to any living human being or to any of their works. This kind of modesty has been *shelled* out of me. I am quite prepared to admit that this is probably a moral loss; but then this is no boast, but a confession. I merely think it necessary to make it, because I know that the same thing has happened to many men of a similar turn of mind who have been through the same experience.

Perhaps this class of men will be able to have some influence on the thoughts of the post-war generation. If so, I think that their religion will be the belief in the infinite perfectibility of mankind through the acceptance of Christian ethics. But I do not think that they will be inclined to favour the claims of any Church to a monopoly of spiritual truth. On the contrary, I venture to predict an increase either in the number of men who say with Schiller that, because they are religious, they do not belong to

any religion, or in the movement that by liberalising, modernising and humanising the Churches, tends to suppress the differences between them and identify all creeds with the religion of Christian mankind.

## IX

### IN THE LAND OF DESPOTISM

Vor dem Sklaven, wenn er die Kette bricht,  
Vor dem freien Menschen erzittert nicht!

SCHILLER, *Die Worte des Glaubens*.

IN the Summer of 1916, my mental crisis reached a climax. A painful intellectual isolation was the price I had to pay for my determination to judge critically for myself opinions and imperatives that were accepted as matters of course by everybody around me. I had many excellent comrades at the front, but I never had the good fortune to find a friend to whom I could unbosom all my thoughts and doubts. This was probably for the best, in so far as it compelled me to think entirely by myself, and facilitated by emancipation from many conventional beliefs. But it also caused me great distress, for, as all reasoning has a tendency to question its own conclusions, my mind left to itself always found new doubts continually to arise as soon as I thought that I had reached provisional certitude.

What made the matter worse was that already for some months I had ceased to find satisfaction in the fulfilment of my duties as liaison officer with a British infantry division. Work, though

plentiful and varied at the beginning, had become very scarce, and the job which, although not exactly "safe," provided me from the outset with a comparatively large amount of comfort and independence, had become too easy for my taste. Charming though the company of my British officer comrades was, I longed to go back to "my boys" and experience again the exhilaration of responsibility and command. Besides, I had from the beginning looked upon my military career as an opportunity for self-education of which I must avail myself to the utmost, and, for this reason, I wished to vary my occupation as often as I could. So when an appeal was made to Belgian infantry officers to volunteer for new trench-mortar batteries that were just being formed, I sent in my application and was transferred a few weeks afterwards to the Belgian trench-mortar battery with which I remained until I left the front for good.

I had selected this post because—save for flying, for which I was above age—it seemed the one that, in trench warfare at least, promised the greatest amount of activity and "liveliness." I wanted to be kept busy so as to have little opportunity for thinking; and, besides, I wanted to remain true to my principle—never to do half-heartedly a thing that has once been recognised as a duty, but to concentrate all my strength on obtaining the maximum effect.



My state of mind at that time was accurately epitomised in a letter to a friend to whom I wrote:

“In spite of my critical attitude towards the popular views on the ethics of this war, I have never felt any real difficulty in doing my duty as a soldier. On the contrary, I think I may say I have always done it eagerly; but not with the eagerness that results from what is generally considered as patriotic enthusiasm. You know that my patriotism has always been very different from the common brand of jingoism. I think war a horrible thing; I do not hate the Germans individually; and I do not consider this war of the Entente Powers (which include Russian Czardom) against the Central Powers as a struggle of everything that is good against everything that is bad. I can see quite plainly that it is merely a struggle between two imperialistic groups; but I see equally plainly that one of these two groups is much more guilty, and above all, much more dangerous than the other. So my eagerness to fight simply results from the fact that, having once selected a line of conduct dictated by my own judgment, at this tragical juncture in the world's history when the sacrifice of millions of lives is unavoidable, I must give myself up entirely, with all the energy and the enthusiasm in my power, to the task which I have recognised as necessary. So much the worse if

this duty necessitates the sacrifice of life, but it is obvious that this duty cannot be well done unless this sacrifice be consented to in advance. No haggling is possible here. Once circumstances which have proved stronger than we (and what have we left undone to prevent them?) have put us on a road which we must follow, we must walk along it resolutely, without looking backward, and until the bitter end. Germany must not win this war. A victorious Germany would be the worst of all possible disasters, for the German people themselves as well as for the whole world. German militarism *must* be defeated. Under what circumstances and in what proportion will the pressure from within Germany co-operate with the pressure from without? That I do not know. But I am convinced that the only thing which can possibly call forth this pressure from within—which I consider as an absolute necessity—is the defeat of the German Army. This we can accomplish if we will, even though it takes a few more years. But it will take less than that if we will strongly enough . . . Your advice “spare yourself” is superfluous. I do not look upon war as a sporting exercise. I do not seek after the rapture of danger subdued, and I never expose myself uselessly. But I do not think that anybody has a right to consider his own life as more precious than his neighbour’s. I am convinced, moreover, that nobody’s life has any value

at all except what it acquires by its use under all circumstances for the common good of mankind. Well, then, at the present time, and as far as I am concerned, I cannot think of any other possible use of life than the fulfilment of military duty with the maximum of fighting efficiency obtainable.”\*

Thus my state of mind remained until the spring of 1917. My expectation that my position as a trench-mortar officer on the Belgian front would distract me from hypercritical thinking and set my conscience at rest, proved on the whole justified. One did not have much time to brood over war-aims even when things were quiet. The immediate concerns, how to keep warm and how to snatch an hour's rest in the corner of a dug-out, required nearly all the intellectual concentration of which a tired man is capable.

My thoughts were almost entirely occupied with my men. I had been extremely lucky, for the some 200 boys of my battery were all thoroughly good and devoted fellows without a single black sheep amongst them. I was, therefore, able to maintain discipline and the high standard of fighting efficiency required for trench-mortar work, without ever having to punish or even to give formal commands. We loved each other and knew it, although circumstances (no soft

\* From a letter to Mr. Louis de Brouckère, dated August 3rd, 1916,

spots!) did not allow any demonstration of feeling. I dreaded to show them even a passing affectionate glance of the eyes, lest they should cease to believe in my supreme indifference to anything but duty and realise how much it cost me to send them to their deaths. Fortunately, they were all so magnificently brave that they required nothing but warnings to be cautious. I know—although they never said a word about it—they were very grateful for my efforts to create welfare institutions in the battery, such as a library, a canteen, a transportable bath, a whole equipment for games and sporting exercises, a band, courses for the illiterate, and many other things. I was amply rewarded for these efforts by the joy I felt in commanding men under such exceptionally satisfactory conditions, and finding that they responded to my will like the strings of a well-tuned musical instrument to the fingers of an artist.

To this period, and especially to the winter of 1916-17 spent in the Steenstrate and Dixmude sectors under extremely trying circumstances, I owe the full realisation of the true, deep happiness that authority over men can bring when it is based on mutual trust and sympathy. To me, there was no greater joy in military life than this; and there is a very simple, but obviously heartfelt letter which I received one day from the mother of one of my men, of which I am

prouder than of the crosses presented to me by King Albert and King George.

Then came the Russian revolution and the entrance of the United States into the war. A new epoch opened, and many of the riddles to which I had so far only found a provisional answer were going to be solved. My conscience would no longer need to be drugged by the weariness that comes from excessive physical hardships.

The first intimation of the new era that was at hand came to me on a happy frosty February morning—I think it was the 5th of February, 1917—when I got hold of a copy of the *London Times* just left behind by a British officer in my billet. It contained the text of President Wilson's address to the United States Senate on the 22nd of January, 1917.

When I was in America in 1918, I found that very few, if any, of President Wilson's own countrymen realised the full meaning of the position he has acquired in the opinion of the intellect of Europe from the time of that address. In his own country, where he is a party leader as well as the President, and where, may be, people see him at too close quarters to realise his magnitude as a power in the world's history, I have found his image distorted with friend and foe alike, by partisanship and by personal sympathy or antipathy. Perhaps, on the other hand, our opinion in Europe is too much idealized by dis-

tance to permit of an accurate judgment of the man Woodrow Wilson; but, at the same time, I think it allows us all the better to discern the great historical features of his character.

It is possible, moreover, that in this case, our illusions matter more than the reality. What many Americans deplore as his excessive wilfulness appears to us as the incarnation of the youthful energy of a great democracy moving forward along a clear-cut direct line of progress. We contrast it favourably with the wavering attitude of our leading European statesmen. I heard other Americans insinuate that there was a good deal of demagogy in his advocacy of the cause of the "Great Unwashed." This is altogether incomprehensible to Europeans, to whom Mr. Wilson's policy appears as a model of uncompromising idealism and almost scientific probity, when we compare it even with that of the best among the leaders of our lawyer-ridden governments. Others again contemptuously called him a professor who is fitter to teach and argue than to act and govern. Not so does he appear to Europeans, who—rightly or wrongly—identify the thorough-going intervention of America in the war with the farsighted practical ability of the President. But even though he were nothing but a herald of ideas and principles, leaving others to do the acting for him, he would still appear to democratic Europe as the man who

gave the lead in a world's crisis when all our own statesmen were muddling in hopeless confusion, reduced, even in their advocacy of ideal war-aims, to expedients so obviously opportunist and so frequently in contradiction with reality that everybody ceased to believe in such men's sincerity and even in their capacity to think beyond the needs of the moment. The old Continent needed the leadership of a man who, even though he should be no more than an exponent of ideas, would give the straggling and dispirited forces of European democracy unity and certainty of purpose. This alone could transform the war from a blind desperate struggling for uncertain aims and under discredited leaders, into a supreme fight for the maintenance of political democracy and the universal application of national self-government.

Only those who know—and very few people seem to realise it even now—in what a hopeless state of moral confusion Western Europe was floundering until the first months of 1917, can understand how the democratic forces of Europe, who alone had still the latent strength to bring about a decision, were inspired by the voice that called from across the Atlantic. The material resources of the Entente powers were so immeasurably greater than those of Germany and her allies, that the war would have been won before 1917, if it had merely been a matter of man-

power, natural wealth and material equipment. The obvious lack of unity and far-sightedness in the strategy of the Entente powers, as contrasted with that which autocratic control and an iron militarism gave their opponents, was due, however, to something far more vital than mere geographical reasons or the supposed inability or treachery of leaders. It was the expression of the lack of moral unity that prevailed until the downfall of Russian Czardom and the assumption of the leadership of universal democracy by President Wilson.

Democracy and labour in Western Europe were already fighting, it is true, for the maintenance of national institutions more democratic than those of Germany; but to do this, they had to yield up all real power to elements of whom the bulk had always been the deadliest foes of democracy and political freedom, and the most dangerous advocates of autocracy, militarism and imperialism, in their own countries. Governments were claiming that they were fighting for justice, freedom, and the emancipation of oppressed nationalities; yet at the same time they were intriguing behind the scenes to prepare a partition of the spoils of victory which would have been an outrage to these very principles. Many of the elements who advocated a war of destruction proved to be financially interested in its duration in the same way as the Krupps and



Skodas who pursued a similar policy on the other side. With some of these so-called enemies they continued to have joint interests. Other imperialistic elements, who had had their share of responsibility in bringing about the conditions that made the war possible, were trying almost openly, whilst still exciting the masses against Germany with the help of democratic slogans, to come to terms with her rulers in a way that would have cemented a Holy Alliance of European imperialism and reaction against the world's democracy. In short, European democracy was demoralised and reduced to impotence by mutual distrust and by the lack of a power to lead it whose motives would be more above suspicion than those of any European Government. If I have dwelt so extensively on my own doubts and hesitations during the first two and a half years of the war, it is merely because they give an image of the state of mind of most lovers of democracy in Europe at that time, to whom the general uncertainty and confusion of aims of the Entente Powers left no other resource but to cling to the theory of the lesser evil and to the idea of a defensive war for the maintenance of their home institutions.

This is why I had but two days of real happiness at the front. The first was that February day, when I read President Wilson's address, formulating a constructive programme to the end

that from this war should arise universal democracy and the independence of nations. A lump came into my throat at the idea that henceforth I need no longer fear I was going to die for a miserable delusion.

Then, a few weeks later, in the trenches before Dixmude, I learned that the first great step towards this goal had been made in Russia, and that from then on there was a clear-cut issue between the last remaining autocratic powers in Central Europe, and, arrayed against them, all the self-governing nations of the world.

The Russian Revolution relieved me from a real nightmare. My hatred of Czardom was so intense that in the beginning, when the end of the war still appeared as a purely military proposition for the mere establishment of a new equilibrium between the European powers, I could not think of any better outcome than a defeat of Germany in the West, and a victory over Russia in the East—a double defeat of Central and Eastern European reaction, which I thought would ultimately result in the downfall of both Czardom and Kaiserism. Later on, as the deeper political significance of the war issues became clear, I had to take refuge in a theory that made a virtue of necessity by considering Czardom as under the circumstances the lesser of the two evils. Like Plekhanoff and many other Russian socialists who had declared themselves in favour

of Russia's war of national defence, I believed that this war would achieve the work of internal reformation that had been begun by the war with Japan, and that Czardom would not survive it. Czardom seemed to me as incompatible with Russia's war as Kaiserism was essential to Germany's war.

For Kaiserism was not by any means a mere survival from mediæval times. The Hapsburgs, not the Hohenzollerns, were the heirs to the old German Emperors whose zenith of real power is separated from the ascent of the Hohenzollerns to imperial significance by a gap of two centuries. German Kaiserism would have been infinitely less dangerous and less powerful if, like the Hapsburg and Romanoff dynasties, all its roots had been in the past. On the contrary, it was an essentially modern form of despotism. It derived its strength from the violence of class antagonism in a country of advanced and rapid capitalist development, where the bourgeoisie had been too busy getting rich quickly to gather energy for a democratic revolution, and therefore found it convenient to leave the political power in the hands of the classes that had ruled the country when it was still in the agricultural stage: the Junkers and the military caste. The Kaiser was merely a figure-head. Kaiserism itself was a symbol borrowed from mediæval tradition, of autocratic and militarised capitalism.

Czardom, on the contrary, was nothing but a survival of old semi-Asiatic despotism, and as capitalist industry began to modernise Russia, it appeared more and more as a system rotten to the core, that becomes unbearable to all classes. A war of the whole Russian nation, that necessitated a mighty effort of organisation and a galvanisation of national energy, was bound to smash to pieces the strait-jacket into which Czardom had clasped a great people.

This expectation had come true at last. I had no longer to fear I might be giving my life for the Czar whilst believing that it was for democracy and freedom.

A few weeks later, about the middle of April, I was unexpectedly ordered away from the front to report at Ste. Adresse, the seat of the Belgian Government in exile. There I was asked if I would accompany my friends, Emile Vandervelde, then a member of the Belgian Cabinet, and Louis de Brouckère, on a journey to Russia. We were to get in touch with the Kerensky government as representatives of Belgian labour. Aside from our diplomatic mission, which, of course, aimed at the prevention of a separate peace between Russia and the Central Powers, I was to visit the Russian front and get an idea of the military situation and the prospects of the planned summer offensive. We left immediately; stayed a while in Petrograd, where we met

Arthur Henderson and Albert Thomas, who were there on a similar mission for Great Britain and France; visited Moscow, Kieff and a few other cities, and the front from Northern Galicia to the Black Sea. We returned in July after having paid a visit to Roumania, at the request of the Bratiano Government and as guests of the King.

From the thousand impressions of this eventful and tremendously interesting journey I will but note a few that have had a lasting influence on my mind and still retain some importance for the judgment of the present and future situation.

I never realised the full importance of a radical reform of our diplomatic methods, culminating in absolute subordination of the professional diplomats, as mere technical instruments of the democratic governments acting openly and under the control of public opinion, until this journey allowed me to peep behind the scenes of the diplomatic world. I am still amazed at the amount of gross inefficiency, childish conceit and criminal irresponsibility that characterise professional diplomacy and seem to be so inherent to the system that not even the best men or the most democratic countries escape their contagion. It put me into the habit of quoting to myself the words of Oxenstierna to his son: "You do not suspect, my son, with how little sense this world

is being ruled." Sometimes it merely filled me with amusement, as if I were seeing Abel Hermant's novel, "*La Carrière*" enacted—a satire which I had always thought exaggerated, but the truth of which I then realised, and which I re-read later with intense pleasure. But there were other times when I thought of the hell I had just left, and of Europe's youth being sacrificed by millions; and then I could have yelled with rage. From what I have seen of diplomacy in the very midst of this war, I can merely say that there can be no lasting benefit unless this cancer of professional and secret diplomacy be cut out. In this respect, also, there is somewhat of Kaiserism to be extirpated in every country.

Judging by what I saw for myself on the spot, I do not hesitate to say that we owe the failure of the European Entente to make the free Russian nation an ally at least as faithful and powerful as Russian Czardom had been in the first place to the inefficiency and lack of understanding of their diplomacy.

It is largely due to the inability of the majority of the diplomats who had been accredited to the Czar to understand the meaning of the revolution and to adapt themselves in spirit to the new circumstances that such a false impression still prevails in Western Europe about the earlier stages of democratic government in Russia and the prospect it offered of a rapid, victorious end-

ing to the war. Many people seem to have forgotten altogether that Bolshevism did not get into power until eight months after the downfall of Czardom, and that it was of practically no account until the failure of the July offensive had inflicted a deadly blow on the Kerensky government. By confusing the Russian Revolution with Bolshevism, they forget that the treachery and incapacity of the Czarist system of conducting the war was one of the main causes of that system's overthrow. They overlook the fact that the original programme of the Revolution was a war for the defence of the newly conquered popular freedom against the Central Powers, and for democratic aims practically identical with those formulated by President Wilson. They also overlook the fact that the Kerensky government made a greater economic and military effort to carry this war to a successful conclusion than the Czar had ever attempted. And I for one am convinced that with a little more understanding and support on the part of the Entente, this effort would have succeeded, struck German militarism a death-blow and spared Russia the ordeal of anarchy and Bolshevism.

Few men in history have been so misjudged as Kerensky. I consider the popular belief that he lacked energy as the exact opposite of the truth. The very fact that this man was suffering from tuberculosis to the extent that he had

had a kidney removed and had practically lost the use of an arm—that this man, to whom after he had assumed power the doctors had given only a few weeks more to live, was yet able to carry on a gigantic day-and-night task for months by sheer nervous strength, is already a strong presumption to the contrary. I have been witness to Kerensky's almost superhuman efforts; his ubiquity and sleepless activity made one think of Napoleon at the height of his working capacity. I can still see him sitting at meetings, which started after midnight and lasted until the morning hours, with a deathly pallor on his face, closing his reddened eyes for a few seconds' torpor whenever he was not directly concerned in the discussion, but wide awake the next minute to take part in it again. Indeed, his will-power was the only secret of his popularity. I would not call him extraordinarily intelligent; there were other members of his government, Tsere-telli, for instance, whose brain power was probably much superior to his. Nor could his eloquence account for his power over the masses. He had none of that artistic versatility of elocution that appeals so much to the Russian mind. His voice was strong, but somewhat hoarse and guttural, and he spoke in short, matter-of-fact, energetic sentences, in a manner more soldierlike than sentimental. The remarkable way in which he nevertheless electrified the masses whenever



he appeared—even when he only expressed himself through his deportment or his gestures—can only be explained by the fascination of his will-power. This is an exceptional thing to find in Russia, where constructive and consistent energy is a rare attribute amongst men, and where the crowds are as receptive to the influence of a manifest strong will as some weak women are to virile energy.

It is true that this will might have been ill-directed or weakened in its effect by intellectual hesitation or sentimentality. Yet, I do not believe that even this was the case. Kerensky seemed to me to pursue with remarkable consistency and ruthlessness from the beginning until the very end a quite definite aim, to win for his government the support of all classes in Russia, from the peasants to the capitalists, that had a common interest in seeing a republican form of national self-government established and consolidated. The means by which he meant to reach this end were obvious enough. They were the same as those of the young American republic after the Declaration of Independence, of the French Convention on the eve of the first invasion: a holy war for the defense of democracy against an enemy despot.

The difficulties inherent in the general condition of Russia were, it is true, enormous. The very disorganisation of the country, which had

caused the downfall of the *ancien régime* that was responsible for it, put an extremely heavy task on the shoulders of the popular power that had taken its place. Certain aspects of the problem of national reorganisation even seemed to be altogether incapable of solution within the short period of time required by the circumstances. Of such, was the insufficiency of the railroad system, and means of transportation generally for the continued maintenance of two million soldiers, along a stabilised front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. But this was all the more reason, as Kerensky realised perfectly well, to aim at a quick military decision.

There was another reason, which was the state of mind of the soldiers themselves. The immediate effect of the revolution had been a sudden loosening of the traditional ultra-Prussianised discipline and the spreading of the illusion that an international revolution was bound to follow and put a prompt end to the war, so that the soldiers might go home to their villages and take their part of the land.

Kerensky has been accused of encouraging military insubordination by his lenient attitude and by accepting the famous Prikase No. 1 of the Soviet government, that established the Soviet system as a regular part of military organisation. I am convinced, however, that he chose the only way that could lead to the reestablishment of dis-

cipline on democratic principles. He was as strict a disciplinarian as any general of the old régime, but he was wise enough to realise that persuasion and propaganda would do more than cruel repression to stop mass desertion and fraternisation with the enemy. He knew, moreover, how to be severe when severity was required. As to the Sovietising of the army, it undoubtedly led in the beginning to some very disagreeable consequences; but the native common sense of the Russian soldiers soon restored the activity of the military Soviets to normal limits, within which they performed very useful functions as organs of democratic control over the interior administration of military units and of propaganda amongst the soldiers. Even the suppression when off duty of compulsory saluting, which has been the object of quite extreme criticism, had no bad effect on discipline.

It is thanks to this wise policy that Kerensky, after less than three months devoted to tireless propaganda, had succeeded in making the war popular with a great majority of the Russian people and in creating psychological and military conditions more favourable to a large scale offensive than any that existed before.

He realised the truth of G. B. Shaw's dictum:

"If the Russian Revolution is to be saved from reaction and the Russian Republic from disruption by the discontent of the working class and

the diversity of the ideals of its own reformers, the revolutionary Government must fortify itself by a war, precisely as the French revolutionary government had to do. If there were no war, it would have to make one."

For all that, not much less than a miracle was required to make Russia victorious. But then this is the sort of miracle that is often brought about by revolutions, which by sheer force of popular enthusiasm magnify beyond all normal measure the power of a nation. After all, the situation of Russia in June, 1917, was much less hopeless than that of France seemed to be in 1792. Kerensky knew this and believed the miracle would happen.

He did not rely on popular enthusiasm alone. I have satisfied myself of the truth of his assertion, corroborated by the Commander-in-Chief Alexeïeff and his successor Brussiloff, that never before had the Russian army disposed of such reserves of men at the front, of such satisfactory supplies, and of such an amount of artillery and ammunition. I took some trouble to survey the situation on the spot, not only by heart-to-heart talks with the general staff of the armies and army corps that were to take part in the July offensive, and by visits to the trenches, but also by flying over the whole front of the offensive, with a Russian pilot, at an altitude (less than 3000 feet) that allowed me to form a quite defi-

nite idea of the Russian, German, Austrian, and Turkish positions. My conclusion was that the odds, tactically speaking, were in favour of the success of the Russian offensive. The numerical strength of the Russian armies at the front was at least twice that of their opponents. The Russian field artillery was notably superior, with a reserve of about 20 million rounds, resulting from the long previous spell of inactivity; heavy artillery and trench mortars were about balanced.

As to the morale and fighting determination of the troops in the sectors of the offensive, it was better than ever before the revolution, according even to observers who were anything but prone to view the revolutionary changes in the army with sympathy. Besides, the Austrians, who formed the bulk of the forces that were to bear the brunt of the attack, were hardly any better off than the Russians from the viewpoint of general organisation and *morale*. I also believe that if the offensive in Galicia, Bukowina and Roumania had succeeded, it would, in view of the lack of enemy reserves behind the Eastern front and the precarious position of the Germans and Austrians in the West, have had consequences reaching far beyond the significance of a local withdrawal.

Why then did it fail, and after some local successes and the swift forward sweep of Korniloff's

army in the centre suddenly result in a rout and panic, with German companies chasing fleeing Russian divisions before them over scores of miles?

A glance at the order of battle on the map of operations clearly tells the cause. Whilst the armies that launched the attack, after having been morally prepared by Kerensky's propaganda, fought heroically for ten days with a success varying according to the amount of resistance encountered; a weak German counter-offensive against the forces on the wings that remained passive put the latter to flight without fighting. Thus the Germans had staked their all in running the risk of having their feeble counter-attacking force annihilated whilst endeavouring to take advantage of the weakness inherent to the precarious Russian undertaking. For Kerensky's policy had been, in view of the short time allowed for a gigantic work of moral preparation, to concentrate all his efforts on those armies that were going to attack. He relied on their success to carry with them the others (amongst whom the Bolshevik defeatist propaganda had gone on unchecked) by sheer force of example and the prestige of victory. The psychology of the Russian crowd is, like that of all ignorant masses, essentially impulsive and changeable. The psychological equilibrium was as unstable with the attacking armies, where

a high pitch of warlike enthusiasm had been reached after a few weeks of intense propaganda, as with the armies on the wings, where prolonged inactivity and forced neglect had created a favourable recruiting ground for Bolshevism. Once the latter yielded to the pressure of incomparably weaker but reckless enemy forces, those of the former who had paid the dearest price for their advance were seized by the contagion of panic, and the ordered strategic withdrawal of the others soon also degenerated into a rout. The very conditions that were to make victory avalanche-like gave an avalanche impetus to defeat.

From then on, Kerensky was doomed, and Bolshevism, the only force that promised bread and peace to a nation exhausted by a disastrous war, the international issues of which it could not understand, was bound to get into power. Most of Kerensky's critics base their charges of weakness and inconsistency on his attitude between the July disaster and the Bolshevik revolution in November, and especially on his final refusal to collaborate with Korniloff and Savinkoff to establish a military dictatorship. I think, on the contrary, that Kerensky put up as gallant a fight as he could against overwhelmingly adverse circumstances and that it does his political honesty credit not to have yielded to the temptation to reestablish by military violence a waning

power that had ceased to have the support of the majority of the people.

I remain unshakably convinced, from my knowledge of the objective conditions of the July offensive, that events at that time might have taken an opposite turn if a little more pro-war propaganda had then been made to check the influence of Bolshevism at its beginning. This would have been possible if Kerensky had been better supported by his Western allies in his endeavour to preach a holy war for democracy and freedom. But, thanks largely to the stupidity of diplomacy and the inadequacy of press information, he was met with mistrust. The publication of the secret treaties and a frank common statement of democratic, non-imperialistic war aims by the Entente Powers would have put Kerensky in a position to crush Bolshevism more effectively than any terrorist dictatorship could have done. But the Russian Government tried in vain to get this collaboration.

At a particularly critical juncture, when it was urgently necessary to oppose the plan of the Stockholm international conference that could only result in a negotiated German peace, and which was used by the Bolshevik propagandists at the Russian front as an argument to prove the uselessness of an offensive, Lloyd George suddenly changed his attitude and by underhand methods encouraged this unfortunate pro-



posal. Arthur Henderson was to act as an instrument in this intrigue. He was loyal enough to leave the War Cabinet later on, on account of his advocacy of the Stockholm Conference, without saying that Lloyd George himself had instructed him in June, 1917, when he acted as a temporary British ambassador in Petrograd, to favor this conference. He did not make the facts of the case public until after the war was over. This is one of the darkest periods in the history of European secret diplomacy, for whilst there was a magnificent chance to make democratic Russia a decisive asset in a final onslaught on the Central Powers, it was spoilt by the lack of diplomatic and military co-ordination.

The intrigues of Entente statesmen were largely responsible for this. Their want of confidence in universal democracy induced them secretly to favour a peace by negotiation whilst openly talking of crushing the foe. Europe has paid dearly for their mistake: they would not trust Russian democracy; they were faced instead with Russian anarchy.

During that period full of magnificent hope and enthusiasm that made one think of the young French nation before Valmy, Bolshevism was of very little account. It was confined to a small but energetic group, mostly composed of political exiles recently returned from Siberia or

Western Europe, whose influence over a section of the working classes in the great cities and of the soldiers was, characteristically enough, on the decline during the few weeks that preceded the July offensive. The chances that they would ever get into power seemed at that time ridiculously small. What struck me most was the fundamental difference, nay, the contrast between the frame of mind of their leaders and that of the mass of the Russian people.

The Russian crowds with whom I came into contact—together with Vandervelde and de Brouckère, I have talked to a total of about 96,000 people at 38 public meetings, both at the front and in the rear—struck me as being of a charming disposition. Unless my impression was very much mistaken, the average Russian, and especially the peasant, seemed to be a sweet-tempered individual, unenergetic, contemplative and sentimental, but with a solid foundation of plain, almost childish enthusiasm. Withal a very unmilitary race, to whom the idea of killing is as adverse as that of being killed. With the exception of a few nomad warrior tribes, it required the foreign influence of an imported military discipline to turn such material into soldiers.

What struck me, above all, was their tolerance and their sheeplike indifference to everything that did not concern them immediately and personally—apart from some sudden waves of temporary

mystic enthusiasm. I have seen meetings terminate in a spirit of charming mutual courtesy that with one-tenth of the explosive power latent therein would in any other country have resulted in most abominable disorder. In short, the life in peasant communities which has given the national psychology its peculiar stamp seems to have developed, in spite of the lack of national self-government, a very strong instinct of solidarity, mutual tolerance, and, as they say themselves, "all-human" sympathy. After I had seen Russia, I could understand the peculiar national quality of Prince Kropotkin's utopia of a free discipline based on mutual help without authority, and I also understood how this advocate of arcadian anarchism had been turned by the war into an energetic patriot.

The yeast that was to make this dough rise was of quite a different quality. They were intellectuals and semi-intellectuals, most of them Jews, Letts, Georgians, and other members of oppressed nationalities, who had been imprisoned or exiled from their native country in their youth. The majority of them had lived in other European countries, where they had formed small migratory colonies that refused to assimilate, or even to come into contact, with the national life of those countries. They were all socialists, of course, but their socialist activity was purely academic and literary. Unable as they were to

do anything in the labour movement either of their native country or of their land of adoption, they had to confine themselves to theorising. Their main activity consisted in meeting from night till morning in small groups around a friendly *samovar*, in smoking an endless number of cigarettes, and in vehement discussion of abstract theories. All of which was to start again the next evening, with a fresh supply of tea, of cigarettes, and—at somewhat larger intervals—of up-to-date doctrines. No wonder that their temper became bitter and intolerant. They were pickled in the vinegar of exile. The result was that Russian socialism appeared as a kaleidoscope of an endless number of so-called parties, factions, fractions of factions, sects, tendencies, and sub-tendencies, all equally eager to claim the monopoly of having discovered the only adequate method of pseudo-Marxian hair-splitting that could save the proletariat.

When the revolution gave these unhappy victims of Czarist oppression an opportunity to return to their native land, which many of them, like Lenine, had not seen since they were less than twenty, they had developed peculiarities of mind that made them the exact psychological opposite of the masses of whom they were to assume the lead.

There is no better proof, by the way, of the pathetic inability of any system of govern-

ment other than democracy to develop the intellectual and administrative capacities of mind required by progressive leadership. On the other hand, any undemocratic policy that tries to keep the labour movement and intellectual progress out of their natural channels of experimental action is bound to result in Bolshevism, viz., in despotism from below as the answer to despotism from above.

This state of things helped me to understand the doctrinal aspect of Bolshevism. Practically, it was nothing but the response of the hungry war-weary masses to the call for support of the only people who could at least promise them a way out of their misery. Theoretically, it was an attempt to adapt artificially to Russian conditions, aggravated by military and economic disorganisation, an abstract doctrine conceived in exile and distilled from social conceptions corresponding to a stage of economic and political development existing abroad but as different from that of Russia as is a hydraulic-press from a sledge hammer in a village smithy.

The Bolsheviks made a virtue of necessity and called their unorganised mob-rule, helped by disbanded soldiers with their machine-guns, the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dogma they had borrowed from the arsenal of the German Social-Democrats, to whom the very spirit of democracy was so foreign that they could not con-

ceive the emancipation of labour except as a kind of military victory of one class over another, replacing the despotism of capital by the despotism of labour. In a sense this really corresponded to the situation in Germany, where indeed the high tension of class antagonism, resulting from the swift development of capitalism, combined with the permeation of all institutions with the spirit of militarism, and the lack of political freedom, made a proletarian dictatorship a probability.

In Russia, however, this term became a mockery. The industrial proletariat, that in Germany, England or Belgium means the majority of the nation, in Russia never formed more than five per cent of the population. During the war, it hardly existed at all, for the majority of the workers of the big factories and mines were in the army—mostly with the artillery and the engineers—and had been replaced by a motley crowd mostly of young peasants and peasant girls fresh from the country, and by casual workers. The Soviet movement that was to be the instrument of the proletarian dictatorship had so little to do with normal industrial democracy that it totally ignored the labour unions, which had reached a certain significance since 1905.

I have made some Russian socialists entertain mild doubts about my sanity of mind by telling them that I thought they ought to replace their

cry of "Down with capitalism!" by "Hurrah for capitalism!" There was nothing more pathetic than to see a Petrograd crowd of unemployed workers, still half-dressed as peasants, and of deserters from the army, walking through the filthy streets, past the idle factories and the empty shops, with the ominous "Down with capitalism" on their banners. If their leaders had learned anything from Western Europe, they ought to have realised that capitalism is a necessary stage of industrial development, without which human productivity could not have reached the level that can alone make possible any improvement of the workers' standard of living, to say nothing of their emancipation as a class. The Bolsheviks reminded me of the man up a tree, busily engaged in sawing off the branch that supports him.

The failure of Russian Bolshevism to achieve anything but disorganisation and demoralisation again convinced me of the truth which the collapse of German social-democracy had already taught, namely, that no sound labour movement, no socialism is possible without a minimum of political democracy—that minimum for the maintenance of which we were fighting. No socialist state would be worth living in unless imbued with the spirit of political freedom, democratic government and efficient administration that cannot arise unless this minimum be at-

tained. A nation that has never enjoyed freedom cannot understand how much it means to those who have it, and who have it because they have conquered it themselves.



## X

### IN THE LAND OF FREEDOM

Have the elder races halted?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond  
the seas?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden, and the lesson,  
Pioneers!—O Pioneers!

WALT WHITMAN, *Pioneers! O Pioneers!*

WHAT the lesson of Germany and Russia had begun to bring home to me in a negative way, my visit to the United States in 1918 succeeded in teaching me positively.

After another spell at the front, the Belgian Government sent me abroad again, in April, 1918. This time I was to go to the United States as labour expert with a mission that was to study, with a view to the reconstruction of Belgium after the war, the American methods of labour management in industry. After this mission was completed, I stayed another few weeks to do some experimental work for the American army, under orders from the Director of Belgian trench artillery. My six months' stay gave me a unique opportunity of getting into touch with all classes of people, in 36 different States; and, needless to say, I learned more things—or

at least, I imagine I did—than are directly concerned with scientific shop-management or trench-mortar experiments.

I came to America with great expectations, combined with a certain uneasiness lest they should be disappointed.

I knew no more about the United States than what I had learned out of books in my study of history and literature. I felt a great curosimy to verify what Viscount Bryce and De Tocqueville had written in their studies on American democracy, and to find out whether there was anything left of the spirit that had animated Whitman's "Leaves of Grass."

I will confess also, although it may seem puerile enough, I was greatly looking forward to seeing the land and the people immortalised by—Mark Twain. When I first saw the Mississippi, which still seemed to me haunted by the ghosts of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer (those heroes of my boyhood!), it gave me a thrill of emotion almost as intense as when I took off my hat to the Statue of Liberty on entering New York harbour. I am sure this will sound very irreverent to those Americans who, unlike myself and many Europeans, consider Mark Twain as an entertainer and nothing more. Perhaps one must be a foreigner to feel the pulse of America beating through that humorous philosophy of his.

Above all, to turn to weightier matter, I

wanted to make sure whether President Wilson was voicing the personal desires of a dreamer or the conscious will of his nation.

It is in this last respect that my expectations were subject to some uneasiness. My mind was still somewhat prejudiced by what I had learnt on the subject of America from the literature of German social-democracy and of the American Socialist Party. They taught us that American democracy was a mere blind to the most ruthless form of capitalist exploitation of the workers, a blind of the "dollar-kings" to justify this exploitation by the figment, achieved through demagoguery and corruption, of its victim's consent.

I had plenty of good reasons not to believe all this. The main one was that America had obviously entered the war under the influence of causes of a higher order than the interests of her capitalists. Her President, elected by popular vote, had advocated war-aims inspired by a much broader vision of the happiness of mankind and by a much truer love of democracy than those of any European statesman. Yet there remained these anxious questions: Did President Wilson's ideals really correspond to the spirit pervading the American people? Was there not the same difference as in European countries between the disinterested war-motives proclaimed openly and the secret, sordid ambitions of influential minorities behind the scenes?

I hasten to say that my anxiety was thoroughly dispelled by what I saw on the spot, and that America has strengthened my belief in the value of democracy more than anything else could have done. I fell in love with her, and this love is all the stronger for not being blind to certain flaws and imperfections.

My greatest surprise was to find that America was not the community of dollar-worshippers that many European critics would make us believe. On the contrary, my decided impression was that in no other country does mere material wealth carry with it less prestige, in no other country is it less considered as being the one aim in life. One finds there, of course, the intense struggle for life inherent to the progressive movement of a highly industrialised and capitalist method of production, which invariably makes money the standard of success. But so it is in all European countries. In America, however, money-making is, as a rule, considered as a means to an end, and not, like in most old countries, as an end in itself. The very word *rentier*—the retired man of business who starts as early as possible to live on his generally very moderate savings in idleness and mediocrity—is unknown in the American vocabulary. There are loafers, sure enough, but they don't advertise it, and their ideal is not popular, as it is in France or Belgium, where the universal desire to become a petty

*rentier* is a real curse to economic progress. Rich people in America mostly work hard (too hard, even) and quite a few of them are as busy in spending money for purposes other than their own as in earning it. The best thing for a rich American to do if he wants to stop working and spend his fortune in idleness, is to go to Europe. He will not be out of place there, whilst if he stays in America he will be pointed at by his own people.

The very prodigality with which most Americans spend their money, as compared with the financial conservatism of thrift-ridden Europe, is evidence that they attach less importance to its mere possession. Again, the dowry system, that makes marriage amongst the wealthy classes of continental Europe almost synonymous with legalised prostitution, is unknown in the States and would doubtless be considered as a gross insult to the dignity of both men and women.

Even making a liberal allowance for the temporary effect of war enthusiasm, the way in which America fostered the spirit of sacrifice to the needs of the community seemed to me to demonstrate a higher level of public morality and social conscience than anything to be found on the European continent. I except England, where the public spirit much more resembles that of America. I will merely compare the attitude of the upper and middle-class Americans with

that of the similar classes in France and Belgium, who I had ample opportunity of observing during the war. There is no need for me to emphasise here how incomparably larger was the total amount of human lives and of material wealth destroyed by the war in these countries than it was in America. Yet the general attitude of the wealthy and comfortable European classes was a stubborn resistance to any lowering of their standard of living, even though justified by the common interest of the nation. The restrictions on food and fuel consumption imposed by law were commonly considered as an annoyance that it was fair to evade whenever an opportunity offered. In America, on the contrary, voluntary restriction was so generally accepted as a moral duty that in many cases it was carried to excess.

Since my return to Belgium, I have met many honourable well-to-do people, who lost their sons and part of their property through the war, and who bravely faced imprisonment, deportation or even execution for defying the Germans during the occupation. But these same people had spent practically all the money they had managed to save in buying food-luxuries at exorbitant prices, rather than change their habits of eating and drinking well and plentifully. They paid five dollars for a pound of butter, thirty dollars for a cwt. of potatoes, and twenty-

five cents for an egg or a quart of milk, without ever thinking that their action cruelly deprived the poorer classes of their chance of getting things which were to them not a luxury but a necessity. I told these epicureans about my American friends who had voluntarily sacrificed luxuries they might easily have paid for if they had wanted to; about the popular response to such appeals as were made for the "gasoleneless Sundays" and for the financial support of the Red Cross and Soldiers' Welfare institutions. They thought I was telling them fairy tales. They certainly did not understand that the more purely democratic character of American institutions had resulted in a much acuter consciousness of national, nay even of human, solidarity, and in an altogether higher standard of public morality.

My experience as a traveller has taught me that there are a few tests that can be made by a casual observer within a few hours' visit to any city or country, and which are a sure indication of the prevailing level of public morality. I observe to what extent the birds in the parks and public squares are afraid of human beings; whether there are many silly or obscene inscriptions on walls, doors, etc.; whether a crowd of people is able to discipline itself when entering a street- or railroad-car and in occupying the space within; how many different "classes" there

are on these, as an indication of the social cleavages in a nation; whether the tip system is widespread or not, evidence as to the dignity with which human labour is treated; whether there are many signboards in public places synonymous with the ominous German *Verboten!* telling how far the people are left to their own honour to behave themselves properly; whether one sees much menial or heavy labour done by women and children; and whether the quantity of papers and offal lying about on park-lawns and similar places denotes a public-spirited citizenship.

The last of these tests is the only one in which I have not found the United States of America to beat the record of all countries I have visited; but then I am told that, especially in New York, the careless throwing about of papers is mostly due to the large percentage of non-assimilated immigrants. Whether this be so or not, I will gladly admit that this little defect may be ignored when the much more important testimony of some of the other experimental observations is considered. The first day I landed in America, I noticed that the birds and squirrels were tamer than anywhere else; that, in spite of the motto "step briskly and watch your step," the crowds were remarkably well disciplined. I found there was practically only one class on the railroads as contrasted with the characteristic German four class system; that tips were much less generally



expected than on the backshish-ridden Old Continent; that very few things were officially *Verboten!* except spitting (and I had no reason to regret this exception); that there was obviously a much greater respect for childhood and womanhood than in Europe. In all my six months' journey through the States I only once noticed an obscene inscription on a wall, and then it was in the vernacular of a country of Latin Europe which the desire to avoid a rupture in the Entente forbids me to mention.

Thus I fell in love with America, at first sight. This love was deepened by a six months' passionate intercourse with her spirit, as it spoke to me from her factories, her universities, her cities, her vast landscapes, her common people and her prominent citizens. It ripened into the resolve that, unless the outcome of the war should make my two little children citizens of the "United States of the World," I would give them a chance of becoming citizens of the United States of America. I am going to carry out this resolve now that the inability of the Old Continent to rise to the height of the new ideals seems to prove that the only country where life is worth living is the one that stands for—to quote Abraham Lincoln—"That sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time . . . which gave promise

that in due time the weight should be taken from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance."

What, then, makes me love America is neither its natural beauty nor its huge wealth and industrial development. It is the idealism that permeates its public institutions, and the higher quality given to the life of its citizens by its faith in democracy, freedom, the sanctity of labour, the equality of opportunity it offers to all men.

I do not think that America is really more beautiful than Europe; its beauty is merely different. Its scenery is less varied, and for all the impressiveness of its huge natural wonders and broad expanses, it lacks the subtlety of charm which a more intimate blending of nature with human life has given to European landscapes. America is still camping on her soil; Europe is at home on hers. Europe has the charm of her historic cities, the endless variety of her architecture, the quaintness of her patriarchal village life that for generation on generation has been identified with the peculiar atmosphere of local scenery. Nature itself witnesses almost everywhere to the impress of human hands in the fields, the hedges, the roadside trees, along the brooks and rivers, while, to those who yearn for "nature undorned," Europe can offer the solitude of Alpine heights, forests, moorlands, steppes and lonely shores, where one can meet Pan face to face as

easily as in the mountains or deserts of America.

As to the immense natural wealth of the New Continent and the superior productivity of its industry, these are only a condition to a better and a happier life. In themselves lies no virtue. They would indeed be a curse were it true that they have made the nation worshippers of Mammon. But I know they have not. Thanks to democracy, superior wealth has not merely resulted, as many would have us believe, in an abnormal accumulation of riches in the hands of a few monopolists. On the contrary, it has raised the standard of living for all classes far above the European level. Thus, if it has not created civilisation in the higher sense of the term, it has at least made it possible for great masses of the people to enjoy it. And the latter are those who in Europe would be denied all access to the world of culture, harassed as they are by the ceaseless, sordid struggle for mere existence, deprived of even a minimum of comfort and leisure, shut off by class prejudices from all real share in public education.

When all is said, I am not at all sure that America's superiority in natural resources is so indisputable, provided we take Europe as a whole, and not a particular European country, as a term of comparison. Those Europeans who, because they refuse to admit the backwardness of their methods of production, argue that

the higher standard of living of the American people is solely due to their greater natural resources, forget that these resources are divided over a territory as big as that of Europe. It is a much longer journey, for instance, from the Californian oil-fields, the Montana metal mines, or the Pennsylvanian coal-pits, to New England, Chicago, or Detroit, than that required for Galician oil, Scandinavian or Spanish ore, or coal from British, German, Belgian or French mines to reach any industrial plant located between the Atlantic Ocean, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Wheat has to travel no further on its way from Russia or Hungary to Antwerp, than it has in going from Kansas City to New York.

My survey of industrial methods in America has convinced me that the chief reason of Europe's comparative poverty is to be sought elsewhere. It lies in the backwardness of methods of production, which lack concentration, standardisation and scientific foresight and research. Coupled with this backwardness there is the strength of class prejudices, sanctified by traditions rooted in feudalism, that refuse to the labouring masses the benefit of hygienic conditions and of an education that would make them at the same time more useful citizens and more capable producers. Moreover, the intellectual inertia of the administrative and bureaucratic classes in Europe is incompatible with the effi-

ciency and alertness required by modern industrialism. Last, but not least, the Old Continent labours under the disadvantage of political institutions that were adapted to forms of economic life very different from the present ones, and of economic frontiers between countries which are really as interdependent as are the States of the American Union. Old Goethe had the right intuition of the cause of America's superiority when he said:

"Amerika, du hast es besser  
Als unser continent, der Alte;  
Hast keine verfallenen Schlösser  
Und keine Basalte."

The progress of American methods of production and of the political institutions corresponding to them has not been hampered as in Europe by the survivals which those "ruined castles" symbolise. I do not know whether absolute reliance can be placed on the calculation made by Mr. Ellis Barker, who estimates that the average American working-man produces, within a given period of time, about two or three times as much as the British worker, largely because American industry utilises three horse-power engines to one horse-power in England. But there certainly is a very considerable difference between the productivity—i.e., between the output corresponding to a given human effort—of America and of Europe.

Bolsheviks would probably retort that it merely proves America to be the most intensively capitalist of all countries. And from this they evidently conclude—according to their naïve argument which opposes the category socialism to the category capitalism—that it is also the most degraded. But let any European socialist, Bolshevik or not, candidly ask himself to what European socialism owes its peculiar combativeness, and, to a large extent, its very existence as a mass movement. Will he not confess that socialism owes what it has won rather to its opposition to survivals from the pre-capitalistic period, both in the institutions and in the public spirit, than to the essence of capitalism itself? I for one have my answer ready. In a country like America capitalism is “pure,” by which I mean that it has developed in an atmosphere of national self-government, political freedom and equality of chances and rights. It is thus the “pure” political reflex of the spirit of competitive capitalist production. I believe that in such an atmosphere socialism can evolve gradually and experimentally from capitalism by the mere play of the tendency to indefinite improvement in efficiency which is inherent to the competitive system, and by the movement towards more and more political self-determination of the masses, which gives them the power to counteract the detrimental effects of monopolisation.

There is no clearer proof of this than the failure of all attempts that have so far been made to acclimatise European socialism in America. Even if the anti-war attitude of the Socialist Party of America had not caused the majority of American-born socialists to leave the party, its traditional methods would never have appealed to the American spirit, for they were European and not American. This party is in fact a federation of unassimilated immigrants trying to import ideas, which may correspond to the conditions in their native countries, but certainly not to those that prevail in America.

Whilst in the United States, I re-read Morris Hilquitt's history of American socialism. I think it as representative of that Socialist Party's stubborn determination to ignore America as is its author of the cosmopolitan, un-American class that forms the bulk of its membership. It dwells extensively on the history and vicissitudes of the tiny colonies and sects created by emigrants and exiles from Europe on what they considered as the virgin soil of the New Continent. But there is not a word about American democracy, just as though there were no difference at all between, say, Russian Czardom and the United States.

I find more potential socialism in the Declaration of Independence, in the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson, than in any

of the so-called socialists' abortive attempts to raise cabbages by the same method as that of our ancestors at the time of primitive communism. A movement that claims the support of the masses, yet deliberately refuses to appeal to their ideals and to utilise the power of their national traditions for an ulterior development that lies entirely on the same lines as those traditions, has no right to complain if the national community behaves towards it like any living organism that obeys the natural law of the elimination of foreign bodies.

But then the word socialism probably means something quite different to me than it does to them. Socialism in European countries, as Bolshevikism and German social-democracy show, is naturally undemocratic to the same extent as the government it opposes. Democratic socialism can only arise from democratic capitalism, and, as far as I am concerned, the war has cured me of any possible inclination to believe that socialism is worth striving for unless it be democratic.

It will have appeared already, from my remarks in a previous chapter about present-day democracy being a system of government by the minority which makes public opinion, that I am not blind to the limitations of even as pure a democratic system as that of the American commonwealth. My conclusion then was that the great superiority of democracy consisted in its



intrinsic tendency to progressive enlightenment of the people ruled, and to the numerical increase of those who are invested with leadership because of their ability to lead—and not because of mere chances of fortune or heredity. Political democracy has not made an earthly paradise out of the United States, nor has it even prevented economic waste, exploitation, poverty, corruption, injustice, intolerance, ignorance, and all the other social evils inseparable from the very existence of economic privilege. Yet, by suppressing political privilege, it has created an instrument (the only efficient instrument under present conditions) by which a nation can gradually reduce these evils and finally bring about the suppression of economic privilege itself. In a real democracy the people live under the economic system they deserve, for they have the power to change it if they convince the majority that such change is desirable.

Most of the imperfections of American democracy, however, seem to me to result from the comparative youthfulness of American civilisation. To this youthfulness America is largely indebted for the wonderful energy and the daring spirit of enterprise of its peoples. But the reverse of the medal is that America somewhat lacks that sense of measure which is a condition to thorough discrimination in the sphere of intellectual life and to refined taste in that of art. I found evi-

dence of this lack of measure, of this exuberance, in the attitude towards the war of a very large section of the American press and of public opinion in the summer of 1918. It seemed to me that there was then, in the manifestations of national hatred, a tendency to sin more against fair discrimination of judgment and good taste in voicing the fighting determination of the country than was to be found even in those countries, like Belgium and Northern France, which had far more immediate reasons to be exasperated than America. In our European countries, the longer duration of the ordeal, the very excess of suffering, and the proximity to the fighting front (which gave the civilian element a better realisation of the tragic earnestness of a soldier's life) taught them that restraint and reticence in the expression of their hatred best befitted those who have to leave the actual doing to others. If I am to judge by President Wilson's utterances against mob rule and spy mania, and by General Pershing's reiterated action against the spreading of tales regarding imaginary atrocities—the real atrocities were bad enough!—there must have been occasions when war enthusiasm in America had a tendency to degrade into war hysteria. I myself found some less harmful manifestations of it when travelling through the States, for I met a considerable number of varieties of the species "man in the street" or "man

in the train" who probably thought they would highly please me by telling me how sorry they were they could not be "over there"; how nice it must be to kill "Boches" at the front every day; and the exact refinement of torture to which they would put "Kaiser Bill" and "Little Willie" if they ever got hold of them. Now, I am well aware that the harmless puerility of this and some other forms of "Boche-eating" was no accurate criterion of the real state of mind of the people, whom on the whole I found to be inspired by a deeper and more ideal realisation of the issues at stake than any European nation. Yet in France, England or Belgium, the general discountenancing of all such futile talk would probably have made this uninteresting species more reticent and less obtrusive than I found it to be in America.

The same weakness of the sense of proportion I am inclined to hold responsible for the difference between the American and the European outlook on art. I purposely use the word difference, because I no longer believe, as most Europeans do, and as I did myself until I visited America, in the superiority of European æsthetic culture.

The higher forms of art were inseparable hitherto from the existence of a leisured class. Europe has had such classes for centuries; e. g., the bour-

geois patricians who gave work to her painters, the aristocracy who enabled her musicians to compose masterpieces, the benefit of which has fortunately become more general and lasting than that of the mere charming of their patrons' idle hours. Such leisured classes America has never had. Indeed, she has hardly had time to start an artistic tradition of her own; for even now American genius is mostly utilised in the production of material wealth and in scientific research. The few Americans who are able to win leisure from such pursuits usually go to enjoy it in Europe. America has no artistic *Bohème* like the countries of the European continent where this is a class by itself. She has excellent painters and musicians; but so far they have practically all borrowed from the accumulated fund of European craftsmanship and tradition.

All this I think will easily be granted. But it does not follow that American artistic culture is as a whole inferior to that of Europe. American architecture, for instance, has an originality all its own, not only as a science of building, but as an art corresponding to the needs and technical means of modern life. As such, it is much more individual, more really artistic, than most modern European architecture. The latter is cramped to such an extent by conventional styles, corresponding to historical epochs and

even to climates entirely different from our own, that it seems unable to stand the supreme test of architectural beauty: perfect adaptation of the builder's material to his purpose. Americans who want to enjoy the beauty of the classic, the mediæval, or the Renaissance period, will have to cross the Atlantic and see Greek and Sicilian temples, Roman arches, Gothic cathedrals, French or English castles and mansions. But to me there is more live beauty in some of the American sky-scrapers, at least in those that are emancipated from the tyranny of European convention, than there is in the pretentious, uncomfortable, and pseudo-historical modern buildings, lifted, as it were, bodily out of some handbook on architecture, and lumped down at haphazard in the cities of the Old Continent. Now, architecture is an important indication of the artistic level of a civilisation. It is the symbolic art par excellence, the most direct and the earliest expression of the spirit of an epoch and of a people. Moreover, it is the most democratic of all arts, since the constant sight of its works by the masses is a far more effective means to educate their taste than any amount of framed masterpieces hung up in museums or cabinets.

Let us ask ourselves by what standard the æsthetic level of national culture can be judged. Only narrow-minded class prejudice will answer

that it is the maximum limit of refinement reached by a small minority. Even then, the only superiority Europe could claim would be that her cultured minority is more numerous than that of America; for some of the American connoisseurs will prove a match for any European. But is not the average degree of culture reached by the population at large a much sounder criterion? Judged according to this, we shall find Europe's present superiority very doubtful indeed. True, more good music is produced in Europe's concert halls and opera-houses, and more good plays in her theatres, than on the other side of the water. But, in both continents, these only attract a small minority. The taste of the vast majority of the people in this respect can be best judged by the productions of the music-halls, "picture shows," and second-class theatres. As far as my experience reaches, I am inclined to say that the artistic level of these productions is a good deal lower in Europe than in America. Again, there are fewer pianos and more gramophones in American than in European homes; but I candidly confess that I think any real tune played on a good gramophone as enjoyable and as profitable to the education of musical taste as most of the mediocre piano-rattling which is considered to give the finishing touch to the daughters of the petty-bourgeoisie of continental

Europe, whose supreme ambition is to be able to make a *sauce béarnaise*, to speak a dozen words of English sporting slang, and to play a "piano-romance" with both hands.

As to the visual test, I know of none more fundamental than the way in which the women dress and the people furnish their houses. I am here on very controversial ground, yet I venture to affirm that American women generally dress with more taste than do those of Europe, perhaps not even excepting the Parisiennes. With regard to the furnishing of American homes, I have visited enough of all classes on both continents to be still more emphatic as to American superiority in taste in this respect. Much more originality is displayed there than in Europe, where the tyranny of the conventional "styles" smotherers every attempt to individualise or even to consider practicability. There is nothing surprising about this if one asks the question whether any art can flourish where there is not a minimum of air, light, cleanliness and comfort higher than that which prevails in the so-called homes of the majority of Europe's population.

No, the relative imperfection of the sense of measure and *nuances*, above referred to, is but the price that America pays for her individualism and energy. Let her pay it gladly. The weaknesses of youth are the easiest to cure. Say what

one will about the difference between American and European civilisation, there can only be one conclusion: they compare with each other like youth and old age. It is not to the latter that the future belongs. Of all the lessons of the Great War, perhaps none is so incontrovertible as this.



## XI

### THE NEW SOCIALISM

Quand je serai mort, berger, tu détruiras toutes les vieilles semences. Elles sont pleines de poussières mauvaises; elles sont rongées; elles sont moisies. Ce n'est plus avec elles que le sol célébrera ses fiançailles. Et toi qui as été partout, tu resèmeras dans mon champ, dans mon clos, des graines nouvelles; des graines toutes vives, toutes fraîches, toutes belles, que tu as vues et reconnues bonnes, là-bas, aux contrées vierges de la terre. . . .

EMILE VERHAËREN. *Les Aubes, I.*

I CANNOT better synthesise the changes worked in my mind by the succession of experiences described in the previous chapters than by setting forth what are now my views on the task of the labor movement.

Whether the ascent of labour to political power, which in Europe at least is synonymous with the triumph of socialism, be viewed with sympathy or not, does not alter the fact that it must now be reckoned with as a near probability. The Russian Soviet Republic, Germany, German-Austria and Hungary are already under the socialist rule. In most of the other European countries, especially those where industrialism is highly developed, like England or Belgium, the socialist labour movement is progressing with such gigantic strides, and deriving such an in-

creased impetus from the growing amount of social discontent resulting from the economic after-effects of the war, that the time seems close at hand when the majority of European countries will have socialist governments.

The remaking of the world, or at least of Europe, which the war has rendered unavoidable appears much less as the rearrangement of frontiers or the creation of new juridical forms for the settlement of international disputes, than as a reforming of the social institutions and of the public spirit of which the war itself was a result.

I would not have thought it worth while to retrace the remaking of one mind out of millions, if I had not considered it as a clue, however small and imperfect, to the remaking of the collective mind that is in its turn to cause the remaking of the world. If it be true then that the compulsion of historical causes, which can no longer be controlled by any human being, is going to entrust socialism with this task, let us try to discern the main characteristics of post-war socialism.

One outstanding fact strikes us at once. European socialism has no longer the unity it seemed to have before the war. There are two antagonistic conceptions, between which the abyss is widening more and more every day. There is Bolshevism, which believes in the establishment of socialism through the dictator-

ship of force; and there is democratic socialism, which conceives socialism as the outcome of the freely expressed will of a majority. The despotic form of the new social order prevails in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe where previously autocratic despotism ruled; democratic socialism is predominant in the democratic states of Western Europe.

Bolshevism and anarchy may be a necessary, though painful, stage in the development of the eastern half of Europe from despotism to freedom, justifying Nietzsche's saying that there must be chaos, so that from this chaos new stars may arise. To democratic countries, however, it rightly appears as a danger, for it is destructive of that very freedom which is the motive power of their progressive development.

Yet Bolshevism is not by any means confined to Eastern and Central Europe. It exists, as a latent or an active force, wherever, through excess of grievances or lack of adequate machinery for their adjustment, conditions obtain that make the masses despair of any other means of redress save the spontaneous use of violence. Even in the United States, and apart from alien movements like that of the Socialist Party, there are sporadic outbreaks of Bolshevism. They are the morbid reactions of such exceptional indigenous conditions as those to which reliable social

observers and the Federal authorities themselves attribute the I. W. W. movement in the migratory industries of the West. In Europe, where this war has left the victorious peoples in a state of impoverishment and demoralisation even worse than that suffered by defeated peoples in any previous war, the germs of Bolshevism are as widespread as those of Spanish influenza.

We shall doubtless have at least two "Internationales" instead of, as before the war, only one. There will be that of the Bolshevik labour movement, which will probably label itself "communist," and that of the democratic socialists. The former will comprise the majorities of Eastern Europe and the minorities—originally gathered together by the Zimmerwald "internationalist" movement—of the other countries. The latter will mainly differ from the old "Internationale" (essentially a European organisation dominated by German social-democracy) in the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon element and viewpoint. This will shift its moral centre of gravity westward and render extra-European expansion more feasible than it was with the old "Internationale."

Although there are already many objective indications of what the spirit of this "western" Internationale is likely to be, conditions are still so unsettled that it is impossible to state its charac-

teristics without making large allowances for the inaccuracy of one's individual outlook. Yet I think I may say that at the utmost only mere shades of opinion differentiate my personal viewpoint from that of the Belgian Labour Party as a whole, and from the opinions of men as representative of post-war democratic socialism as the Belgian Vandervelde, the Frenchman Albert Thomas, the Englishman Arthur Henderson, or the Swede Hjalmar Branting. My own mental evolution can therefore be taken as to some extent characteristic of the general revision of democratic socialism in Europe.

The outstanding feature of this new socialism seems to me the recognition of the essential importance of political democracy. This, first of all, refers to the method by which a new social order is to be brought about; i. e., the gradual seizure of political power through propaganda aimed at forming a majority. But it also means that this new social order must be based on the principle of government by the consent of the governed, with all the correctives to unbounded majority-rule implied by the constitutionally safeguarded liberties of opinion, press, speech, and opposition by representative bodies. Only the continual and indefinite development of such liberties, and the making of their organisation more and more adequate to the intricacy of mod-

ern administration, can prevent socialism from turning into a form of despotism. And a despotism such as this would entrust a tyrannic and incapable officialdom with a power more absolute than that of any Czar, since it would fetter not only the political, but also the economic, destinies of the people.

There is no worse menace to *democratic* socialism than *State* socialism, which seems to be the aim of the socialists in Central and Eastern Europe. The tendency towards state socialism is incidentally aggravated by three circumstances common at present to all European countries: the crisis in parliamentarianism, the danger of bureaucracy, and the lack of administrative ability among the masses.

Russia is a warning of the menace to economic life, and to civilisation in general, that lies in the ascent to power of masses who in their normal conditions of life have never been given opportunity to acquire that minimum of knowledge and administrative capacity without which government becomes technically impossible. This danger is less, of course, in the rest of Europe, yet everywhere the actual power of labour, both in the political and industrial field, has a tendency to increase faster than its administrative capacity. My position as chief of the Belgian Labour Party's educational department (which aimed at reducing this very discrepancy) has taught me

that even the empiric education which thousands of workingmen get through their practical activity in the trade union and co-operative movements is powerless to achieve this end. On the minds of most of these men—whom the carelessness of public authorities has left scandalously ignorant—this activity of a very restricted range during a few leisure hours has, rather, a narrowing effect, which only a better general education in public schools and through the labour movement's own institutions can counterbalance. The Belgian socialist, Emile Vandervelde, was thinking of this widespread ignorance when he once said that he wished his party to be put as late as possible "through the ordeal of political power."

This problem calls all the more for solution as the crisis in West-European parliamentarianism makes it clearer every day that the abilities required by a government, in the increasingly broad sense which this term assumes, are very different from those that adorn the lawyers who make such beautiful speeches in our Parliaments. Too long has parliamentarianism been confused with democracy. European experience shows more and more that parliamentarianism is but one aspect, and that not even an essential one, of the self-government of nations. The intricacy of administrative problems grows as the field of state and municipal activity expands and as business effi-

ciency requires an increasing division of functions and individual responsibility. The rôle of ministers is practically reduced to that of political liaison-agents between the administrative, the legislative, and the executive powers. Their former activity as leaders of their administration has become a myth. Where public bodies manage economic undertakings, they have as a rule proved inefficient and wasteful until it was realised—as, indeed, only a minority of European governments have realised as yet—that the authority of parliamentary bodies in such cases has had to be reduced to a mere power of censure, whilst the technical leaders responsible had to be given an administrative autonomy similar to that which obtains in private businesses. In parliamentary life itself, the party system has fossilised and the original procedure has turned into an instrument of professional intrigue to such an extent that it has become a check on progressive legislation. More and more, therefore, recourse to the plebiscite seems to be the only way of securing adequate expression of the popular will as to the merits of any legislative measure that may be proposed.

Therefore the new socialism cannot confine its aim to the extension of the rights of public bodies in the field of economics. There is probably now in the main European countries a majority con-



vinced that private property in land and in the principal means of production and transport is no longer justified. It has resulted in parasitism and monopoly, and lost the impetus originally derived from "free competition." There seems to be no alternative left but to nationalise such land properties as are not used by their proprietors themselves, and to establish public ownership of railroads, mines, and monopolised industries generally. Pre-war socialism was wont to conceive this socialisation as a very easy process. It simply meant that the State would have recourse to expropriation, with or without indemnity, or by the help of devices like the single-tax system, and establish itself as the manager of the properties thus acquired. Not much thought was given to the changes that would have to take place in the organisation of the State itself in order to fit it for such a task; a mere quantitative extension of parliamentary rule was all that was considered necessary.

But now that socialism has exchanged the stage of doctrinal criticism and propaganda for that of realisation, it can no longer remain blind to the fact that if the State, as it exists today, were to be made both the owner of such a large proportion of the national wealth and manager of its production, it would only be putting an end to some of the abuses of private monopoly in

order to increase others. Above all, this might well result in such inefficiency that the output would be seriously reduced, to the loss of the community in general.

Now that this problem is beginning to be seriously tackled, as Emile Vandervelde has recently done in his book, "Socialism versus State," it is being realised that some indispensable safeguard of efficiency and real democratic control must be secured before any further extension of public ownership takes place. The right of ownership can, apparently, be left to the State without great difficulty, but not the management. This should be given over to public bodies, under the ultimate control of national legislation. But a considerable amount of administrative autonomy must be given and the collaboration of those actually engaged in the work of production with its local management must be allowed for. The movement towards industrial democracy, to which war conditions have universally given such a strong impetus, shows how this collaboration can be organised.

The progress of labour unionism has already led, in quite a number of trades, to a point where conditions of labour are no longer autocratically fixed by the employer, but—through the instrumentality of collective bargaining, shop stewardship, factory constitutions, etc.—by joint bodies

representing both the employer and the employed. My study of industrial management in the United States and abroad has convinced me that this is really the only means by which satisfactory conditions of labour can be provisionally secured, and increased productivity attained, without augmenting the individual strain. When labour has no longer to come to terms with a "boss" who is at the same time owner and manager, the problems of organised collaboration between the management and the managed will be a good deal easier to solve. The State will then have to intervene only to prevent industrial democracy from turning into a guild system for the exploitation of the community either through too low efficiency or too high prices.

Personally I would go even further and at least as a transition give the preference to a system of competitive and experimental socialisation, in which the State would not appear as an expropriator save in cases of absolute necessity, where no loss of productivity is to be feared, like the suppression of parasitic landlordism. Where industrial production is concerned, I think the most effective way to establish forms of public ownership and democratic management would be to make the State—or, rather, a democratically controlled public body especially equipped for this task by the State—the competitor of private enterprise, which would be deprived of its mo-

nopoly by such competition. Thus the evils of private enterprise could be ultimately suppressed without losing the benefit of the incentive to efficient management and high output which lies in competition, whilst the experimental character of the undertaking would facilitate the gradual adaptation of the new administrative organisation to the economic needs of the case. We are faced with the obvious impossibility of preventing European officialdom from becoming an obstacle to progress and efficiency wherever the incentive of competition is eliminated and popular control becomes increasingly difficult to organise. And it is this that makes me think that some sort of procedure such as that suggested will most likely have to be adopted by democratic socialism when it gets to work on the task of socialisation.

The rise of capitalism has deprived the majority of the control of the means of production they are using; it has lengthened the hours of work beyond the measure compatible with hygiene, happiness and culture; it has pauperised artisans and peasants; it has sent the women and children into the hell of factory life; it has threatened to turn civilisation into a slag heap by robbing humanity of the joy of life, the beauty of leisure, and the belief in an ideal purpose. But it has also given humanity the disposal of an accumulation of material wealth sufficient to bestow com-

fort and the possibility of happiness on all; it has created machinery by which the human effort necessary to maintain and augment this wealth can be indefinitely reduced so as to leave more time for the pursuit of higher purposes; it has—by building railroads and steamships, weaving a network of telegraphic and telephonic lines about the earth, and making the air itself a means of communication between countries and continents—turned the whole world into one great community of interests and desires. Moreover, whilst dragging the artisan away from his own shop and the peasant from his ancestral field in order to compel them to sell the strength of their bodies on the market, it has unwittingly smashed the chains of slavery, serfdom and guild-tyranny, and made men potentially free and equal members of the political commonwealth, so that democracy and the power of the masses to control their own destiny have become possible. Capitalism has, in a word, made feasible the boundless expansion of forces and ideals which are mankind's weapons in the war "that is a longer and greater one than any."

The new socialism should, therefore, be more than an antithesis to capitalism. It should be, and I think it will be, a synthesis making the incentive of competition and the constant increase of human productivity, which we owe to capi-

talism, serve the ideals of freedom, equality of rights and chances, and universal solidarity, which we owe to democracy. Only thus can the reconciliation of the two equally vital, but still antagonistic, principles of individual liberty and social unity be effected.

The doctrine of this socialism will not waive the benefit which the theoreticians of the old "Internationale" derived from the use of the Marxian method of interpreting history in the light of economic facts. But here, too, it will have to synthesise. It will have to recognise that the economic interpretation of history shows but one of the strands out of which the texture of human adventure is woven. It is as silly to reduce (as most dogmatic Marxians do) the influence of individuality, human ideals, religion, mass psychology; of the progress of science, art and literature, and so forth, to a mere reflex of the prevalent mode of production of a period, as it would be to conceive man as *homo economicus*, a puppet animated only by the strings of the economic interests proper to its social class.

The war has shown that the Marxian theory of the class struggle needs revision. It remains true that the antagonism of economic class interests is an essential motive of the conflicts through which progress realises itself. But there is also a large, a much larger field than pre-war social-

ism believed, where the interests of all classes coincide. To this common interest appeal should be made, as well as to class interest. The whole community has the same concern that hygienic conditions should be such as to prevent the spreading of plagues; that a minimum of public education should be provided for all; that cities should be supplied with food, fuel, water, fresh air, and light; that justice and police should keep the law established by the popular will; that means of transport and communication should exist; that street traffic should be regulated, fires and floods fought, navigation made secure, and a thousand other things. Do not these bring it about that even the poorest labourer finds himself bound in every occurrence of his daily life by at least as many ties of interest to the community as a whole as to his fellow-workers with whom he is united by class solidarity? Is there not a common interest of humanity that the world should be made to produce as much wealth as possible, and that the productivity of human labour should be increased? Is it in the interest of the proletariat alone that the wholesale destruction of life and property caused by war should be prevented; or does not this object rather unite the immense majority of all nations against a few profiteers? Finally, do we not see labour itself, when compelled to threaten a cessa-

tion of work for the improvement of its condition, constantly appealing to the interest of the community at large to avoid a stoppage of production or of transport and to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear upon stubborn employers? If this be so, then the theory of the labour movement must be put in accordance with the practice. Thus, the doctrine of *class* solidarity should be complemented by that of *social* solidarity, and the appeal to the common interest of all, or nearly all, be made the dominant motive of a movement that, being essentially democratic, aims at rallying to its side the majority of the people.

Even the mischievous abuse of the watchwords Law and Order, to justify ruthless oppression or the suppression of minorities, need not prevent socialists from stating openly and sincerely that they intend to reach their aims not by the use of violence, but by the legal and orderly conquest of the will of the majority. It is of the very essence of democracy that rebellion is a sacred right, nay a duty, should a minority try to impose itself upon the majority by misusing the power which it derives from social privileges or from its superior material strength. The same applies to a minority, if the majority break the constitution in order to deprive it of the use of the legal means which may enable it in turn to become a



majority. But apart from these cases, it is in the public interest that the law which expresses the popular will should be respected, and all disturbances, which may result in loss of wealth or life, avoided.

Russia shows that the problem confronting labour is not only how to get control of the instrument of production and public administration, but also to see to it that this instrument is adequate in itself and that the very method by which it is seized does not put it out of use. British Fabianism, which I confess to have treated (like most other pre-war socialists on the European continent) with undeserved contempt as a hobby of the dilettanti of officialdom, hereby proves that it was in the right in studying problems of administration at a time when the likelihood that these problems would affect the labour movement seemed very remote. Something more than study of the problem is, however, required, namely, the recognition of the fact that both the political and the industrial policy of labour must be so directed as to insure the improvement of the technical means of production and administration at the same time as their control gradually passes into its hands.

The expectation that the New Socialism will be pragmatic and practical, even as pre-war socialism was dogmatic and sectarian, is mainly

justified by the shifting of the new "Internationale's" centre of gravity from the Russian and German East to the Anglo-Saxon West. In the East, the predominant form of pre-war socialism was political and theoretical; in the West, it has always rested on the solid foundation of the trade union movement. Trade unionism, with its daily pursuit of immediate improvements and its widespread creation of effective responsibility, develops a much more realistic spirit than did the more academic and less responsible doctrinal or electoral propaganda which was the main manifestation of German and Russian socialism. The meetings of the old "Internationale" usually showed a disagreeable predominance of the professional politician and of the crank; the new "Internationale" of democratic socialism promises to be democratic in this also, that it will be more representative of the fundamental aspirations of the masses than of the ambitions of self-styled leaders.

It will be worth what the masses themselves are worth. Will they save Europe from the decay that threatens her, and once again fashion a new civilisation upon her ancient hallowed soil? I do not know. But this I know, that if labour does not save her nothing will. Labour is the only element that can give her the unity she needs.

I have purposely restricted my remarks about post-war socialism to a broad sketch. I am not a builder of formulæ. I have lost my faith in them. They are good only to be knocked over by facts. I wanted to depict a state of mind rather than to draft a programme. It seems less important to me that we should get hypnotised by the dogmæ of partisan politics than that we should evolve, with those who have to play a part in the remaking of the old world, the new state of mind that is needed to help humanity recover the control of its destinies.









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